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**130 years
Ludwig Wittgenstein
(1889-2019)**

Conference Proceedings

Kamen Lozev & Marina Bakalova (Eds.)



Belgrade, 2020

 **Austrian
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SOFIA UNIVERSITY
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130 years Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-2019)
Conference Proceedings

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Editors' note

This collection of papers under the title *130 YEARS LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN (1889-2019)* comes out as a result of a conference held on 16-17 October 2019 under the same title to celebrate the Anniversary of Ludwig Wittgenstein's birth. It can hardly be doubted that Wittgenstein was one of the emblematic (and for many the most enigmatic) figure of the Twentieth century. As time passes by, and as more and more Wittgenstein's anniversaries are celebrated, it becomes clearer that Wittgenstein's influence covers more fields than simply philosophy. More and more people today turn to Wittgenstein and investigate his works in search for inspiration or deep insights.

The two-day conference in Sofia which gave birth to this collection of papers was held under the auspices of the Austrian Embassy in Sofia. We are very thankful for their generous financial support that made the event possible. The Conference was organized by the Bulgarian Society for Analytic Philosophy (BSAP) assisted by the Philosophical Departments of the Sofia University and the South-West University 'Neofit Rilski' in Blagoevgrad. Our special thanks go to the BAS members, working at the Sofia University, who arranged for the excellent facilities we enjoyed within the two conference days full of exciting discussions on Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy. Last but not least, our thanks go to all Conference participants and speakers from twelve different countries who decided to come to Bulgaria on this special occasion. Some of them contributed to this collection of papers.

**Kamen Lozev & Marina Bakalova,
March 2020**

CONGRATULATORY ADDRESS FROM THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY SOFIA

Mr. Konstantin Saupe
Deputy Head of Mission

The Austrian Embassy, and myself, have gladly accepted to support and participate in this event dedicated to the celebration of the 130th anniversary of Ludwig Wittgenstein, especially when viewed in a broader cultural context (which, as far as I understand, is present in some of the referats of this conference). The Austrian Embassy supported already another Wittgenstein conference 15 years ago - we find such scientific and educational projects particularly important, because whenever we celebrate the anniversaries of thinkers like Ludwig Wittgenstein, we contribute something to the development and humanization of the world in which we all live.

Ludwig Wittgenstein is undoubtedly one of the greatest and influential philosophers of the twentieth century, the creator of two different philosophies, which, however, equally shook up the philosophical - and more generally – the world of thinking people in Europe and the world. Both of his philosophies are broadly CULTURAL, not just narrowly philosophical.

Wittgenstein's place in the history of philosophy is a peculiar one. His philosophical education was unconventional (going from engineering to working first-hand with one of the greatest philosophers of his day in Bertrand Russell) and he seems never to have felt the need to go back and make a thorough study of the history of philosophy. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the only philosophy book that Wittgenstein published during his

lifetime. How would look like his career nowadays at a modern university? Would it be possible at all, with only one book? But as Wittgenstein wrote : „Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.“ Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”

There is no doubt that Vienna, with its cultural traditions and achievements, was one of the roots and an important inspiration for Wittgenstein. As we know the Wittgenstein family was large and wealthy. The Wittgensteins' home attracted people of culture, especially musicians, including the composer Johannes Brahms, who was a friend of the family.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, of course, belongs to European and world philosophy and culture and cultural heritage. And here we should of course mention a special link between Wittgenstein and Bulgaria, the House Wittgenstein in Vienna - the villa designed and built from 1926 to 1928 by Paul Engelmann and Wittgenstein for Margarethe Stonborough-Wittgenstein, the philosopher's sister. Since the 1970s, after careful restoration, the building houses the Bulgarian Cultural Institute, an attraction spot for Vienna visitors.

I. LOGIC

**“Logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is”:
Wittgenstein on Moore’s Paradox
and the Logic of Assertion**

Jonas Held

Leipzig University, Germany

Jonas.Held@uni-leipzig.de

Abstract: *In a letter to Moore, Wittgenstein says about sentences of the form “I believe that p , but not- p ” that they show “that logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is”. This is surprising. Moore’s paradox is commonly taken to reveal something about the nature of belief and not about the nature of logic. Wittgenstein’s remark on Moore’s paradox can be read, however, as an argument against the Fregean picture of judgment and assertion and its corresponding idea of logic. I will illustrate the connection between Moore’s paradox and the nature of logic in the light of Wittgenstein’s criticism of the Fregean picture.*

Key words: *Wittgenstein, Moore’s paradox, force–content distinction, Fregean model of judgment and assertion.*

1. Introduction

Ever since Wittgenstein attended a talk by G. E. Moore at a meeting of the Cambridge Moral Science Club in October 1944, he was fascinated by what is nowadays known as Moore’s paradox. There are two main examples for the paradox:

- A) I believe that it is raining, but it is not raining.
- B) It is raining, but I don’t believe it.

At least in a formal sense, sentences of the form A and B are not contradictory. A formal contradiction such as “It is raining and it is not raining” can never be true. A and B, however, can be true. We can easily imagine a case where I believe it is raining, even though it isn’t raining, or a case where it is raining and I don’t believe it is. If one asserts, judges or believes a sentence of the form A or of the form B, one nevertheless contradicts oneself, even if the sentence itself does not express a formal contradiction.

It is commonly held that reflecting on what is self-contradictory about sentences of the form A and B reveals something about the nature of belief. This is also true of Wittgenstein’s discussion of the paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*. But according to Wittgenstein, reflecting on Moore’s paradox has a much broader significance. After Moore’s talk at the Cambridge Moral Science Club, Wittgenstein tells him in a letter that “the ‘absurdity’ of the assertion ‘There is a fire in this room and I don’t believe there is’ was ‘the most important point’ of his talk (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365). Wittgenstein then calls the ‘chief merit’ of Moore’s talk ‘that it shows that logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is’:

You have said something about the *logic* of assertion. Viz: It makes sense to say “Let’s suppose: p is the case and I don’t believe that p is the case”, whereas it makes no sense to assert “p is the case and I don’t believe that p is the case”. This *assertion* has to be ruled out and *is* ruled out by “common sense”, just as a contradiction is. And this just shows that logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is. In particular: that contradiction isn’t the *unique* thing people think it is. It isn’t the *only* logically inadmissible form and it is, under certain circumstances, admissible. And to show this seems to me the chief merit of your paper. (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365)

But why should reflecting on the absurd or self-contradictory character of sentences of the form A and B reveal not just something about the nature of belief but about the nature of logic?

My aim in this paper is to answer this question. But answering this question requires answering another question first: What does Moore's paradox say about "the *logic* of assertion"? In my reading, Wittgenstein discusses this question against the background of the contrast between assertion and supposition. Only a clarification of this contrast and its connection with sentences of the form A and B will finally reveal the connection between Moore's paradox and the nature of logic.

Whereas the assertion "It is raining, but I don't believe it" is absurd or self-contradictory, the following supposition is not absurd or self-contradictory:

C) Suppose: It is raining, but I don't believe it.

Marie McGinn (2011) stresses the fact that Wittgenstein, in his discussion of Moore's paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, reformulates the paradox in light of this contrast between assertion and supposition:

87. Moore's paradox can be put like this: the utterance "I believe that this is the case" is used in a similar way to the assertion "This is the case"; and yet the *supposition* that I believe this is the case is not used like the supposition that this is the case. (PI, p. 199e)¹

According to McGinn, the "real paradox" is "the fact that the word 'believe' seems to mean something quite differently, in different contexts" (McGinn, 2011, p. 61). Moore's paradox raises questions not only concerning the self-contradictory character of assertions of the form A and B, but also concerning

1 In the following, the abbreviation "PI" refers to the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 2009) and "RPP" to the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (Wittgenstein, 1980).

the meaning of verbs such as “believe” and “judge”. Such verbs seem to mean something quite different in their use in the first person present tense than in their other uses, especially when used in suppositions. If I assert “I believe that it is raining”, I thereby assert that it is raining. By contrast, I do not speak about the actual weather if I say “Suppose: I believe that it is raining”. In this case, I’m speaking instead *about myself* and what it would be for me to believe that it is raining.

As Wittgenstein notes, a similar contrast occurs between present and past beliefs.² If I say “I once believed that it was raining”, I speak about myself in the past and I assert neither that it *is* raining, nor that it *was* raining. It is therefore not absurd to assert the following sentence:

D) I once believed that it was raining, but it was not.

In what follows, I will mainly focus on the contrast between belief and supposition and I will only gesture in a certain direction when it comes to past beliefs.

If the statement “I believe that it is raining” is about the rain, then it seems to have a different subject matter from the statement “Suppose, I believe that it is raining”, which is about the person who asserts it. But if this is the case, the following problem seems unavoidable:

88. So it seems as if the assertion “I believe” were not the assertion of what is supposed in the supposition “I believe”! (PI, p. 199e)

Wittgenstein is speaking here in the voice of his opponent, who is speaking from the point of view of a certain

2 “89. Similarly, the statement ‘I believe it’s going to rain’ has a similar sense, that is to say, a similar use, to ‘It’s going to rain’, but that of ‘I believed then that it was going to rain’ is not similar to that of ‘It rained then’” (PI, p. 199e).

philosophical background. Joachim Schulte (1993 and 2016) and Severin Schroeder (2006) have both drawn attention to the fact that the relevant philosophical background here is the Fregean model of judgment and assertion, where every judgment/assertion contains a supposition. In the Fregean model, there is a straight line from supposition to assertion/judgment (see Schulte, 2016, p. 206).³ This model seems to break down, however, with respect to the assertion “I believe that p”. It seems the assertion “I believe that p” does not assert what the supposition “Suppose: I believes that p” supposes, which leads to the opponent’s claim in § 88. Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox illustrates several attempts by the opponent to bring the assertion “I believe that p” back in line with the corresponding supposition.

In a footnote on Schulte’s and Schroeder’s interpretations, McGinn writes that, in the context of the discussion of Moore’s paradox in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein’s “emphasis appears to be on the distinctive grammar of the concept believe, rather than on criticizing Frege’s conception of assertion” (McGinn, 2011, p. 72, fn. 11). In what follows, I will attempt to show that McGinn is wrong (at least in this point). Wittgenstein is interested not merely in the distinctive grammar of the concept believe, but in questioning the whole Fregean framework that underlies his opponent’s argument. We are only able to understand why Wittgenstein takes Moore’s paradox to say something about the nature of logic, if we reconstruct his argument against the Fregean framework. As I will show in the third section, this will also lead to the challenge to rethink the relation between assertion and supposition. According to the Fregean model of assertion and judgment, the supposition “Suppose: p” is thought to be a force-

3 At the end of his discussion of Moore’s paradox in remark 106, Wittgenstein writes: “Even in the *assumption* the pattern is not what you think” (PI, 201^e). (The German word “*Linie*” is translated here as “pattern”; I believe “line” would be more accurate.)

neutral act of merely entertaining the propositional content p , which is the primary truth bearer. Asserting that p is then thought to be a further act. Merely entertaining a proposition in this sense is grasping the corresponding sentence of the form “such-and-such is the case”. The meaning of such a sentence is thought to be independent of its concrete use in different language games. Logic is then thought to deal with such sentences and the way they are related to each other. By contrast, how such sentences are used to communicate, to judge or assert something etc. does not belong to the business of logic. It is this picture of logic, which is part of the larger Fregean framework that Wittgenstein criticizes as oversimplified: Wittgenstein insists that sentences do not have meaning independent of their concrete use in language games. A sentence that merely expresses a propositional content is not a sentence at all. Once one takes this into account, Moore’s paradox appears in a different light.

I will start by explaining the relation between the assertion “I believe that p ” and the assertion “ p ”. I will show why such an explanation is conceptual rather than psychological (section 2). I will then show the connection between Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox and the Fregean model of judgment and assertion (section 3). Finally, I will show how Moore’s paradox illustrates that “logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is” and that “contradiction isn’t the *unique* thing people think it is” (section 4).

2. Against a Psychological and a Behavioristic Explanation

In the first part of his letter to Moore, Wittgenstein writes that it “seems to be wrong or *highly* misleading” to take the absurdity of sentences of the form A and B to be “an absurdity for *psychological* reasons” (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365). An argument against a psychological explanation of the absurdity can be found

in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.⁴ According to such an explanation, it is a special feature of the mental state of believing that self-ascribing this state implies taking something to be the case:

90. “Basically, in using the words ‘I believe . . .’, I describe my own state of mind – but here this description is indirectly an assertion of the fact believed.” – As in certain circumstances, I describe a photograph in order to describe what it is a photograph of.

But then I must be able to go on to say that the photograph is a good one. So also: “I believe it’s raining, and my belief is reliable, so I rely on it.” – In that case, my belief would be a kind of sense impression. (PI, p. 199e)

The proponent of a psychological explanation uses an analogy to defend his position: Just as I indirectly describe the scene that a photograph depicts when I describe the photograph, I indirectly assert what’s the case when I ascribe a belief to myself. This is why one contradicts oneself if one asserts a sentence of the form A or B. But as Wittgenstein shows, the analogy is sound only if I could trust my own beliefs. The problem here is not that my beliefs are not sufficiently trustworthy, but that the idea of trustworthiness makes no sense with respect to my own beliefs: “One can mistrust one’s own senses, but not one’s own belief” (PI, p. 199e).

If we treated a belief in the same way we treat a sense impression, it would undermine the very idea of what it is to believe something. If you believe something, you make up your mind on the basis of some evidence, but your belief is not itself

4 Because the focus of this paper is on the relation between Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox and the nature of logic, I only give a very brief summary of his argument against a psychological explanation of the paradox. In Held (2019), I try to reconstruct Wittgenstein’s argument in more detail.

a further piece of evidence.⁵ This is a grammatical remark about the concept of “belief” and not an empirical fact we learn about a certain state of mind. It is against this background that we have to read Wittgenstein’s famous remark:

92. If there were a verb meaning “to believe falsely”, it would not have a meaningful first person present indicative. (PI, p. 199e)

While the psychological explanation may have other serious limitations, here it is more important to recognize Wittgenstein’s general line of argument, which does not rely on the fact that his opponent takes beliefs to be inner states with some special representational features or that he defends a more or less Cartesian conception of mind.

A similar argument also speaks against a very different conception of mind that Wittgenstein is considering in the course of his discussion of Moore’s paradox:

102. This is how I’m thinking of it: Believing is a state of mind. It persists; and that independently of the process of expressing it in a sentence, for example. So it’s a kind of disposition of the believing person. This is revealed to me in the case of someone else by his behaviour; and by his words. And so just as well by the utterance “I believe . . .” as by the simple assertion. – Now what about my own case: how do I myself recognize my own disposition? – Here I would have to be able to do what others do – to attend to myself, listen to myself talking, make inferences from what I say! (PI, p. 201e)

In contrast to the psychological explanation above, I will call the explanation expressed in this quotation behavioristic. Roughly, it says that I can infer what I believe – and therefore what I take to be the case – from my behavior and, in particular, from my

5 I take the account of belief in terms of “making up your mind” from Matthew Boyle (2011).

own words. But again, it would make sense for me to infer what I believe from what I say only if I could trust my own words. In this case, I would treat the verbal expression “I believe that p” not as an expression of my belief, but as a piece of evidence from which I am entitled to infer that I believe something. For this to make sense, Wittgenstein writes, one “would have to imagine a kind of behavior suggesting that two beings were speaking through my mouth” (PI, p. 201e).

Neither our beliefs themselves understood as inner states nor the verbal expressions of our beliefs are to be conceived as pieces of evidence from which we infer what we take to be the case. Moore’s paradox cannot be explained on the basis of an inference from the self-ascription of belief to the objects of beliefs. This raises the challenge for another explanation. I will conclude this section by developing my own understanding of belief. On the basis of Wittgenstein’s criticism of the behavioristic explanation of belief, I try to find an answer to the question how to conceive of the expression of a belief such that *one person*, and not two people, is “speaking through my mouth”.

In the case in which we ascribe a belief to someone else, we can distinguish between a descriptive and an evaluative element. We can ascribe a certain belief to a person and evaluate it as true or false. This is why it is not absurd or contradictory to say:

D)Donald believes that it is raining, but it is not raining.

Beliefs are not simply true or false; rather, they *should* be true. Truth is the relevant norm for evaluating beliefs. In D, we say of Donald that he believes something that he should not. We ascribe a belief to him and evaluate it as false. But in my own case, I cannot, in a first step, ascribe a belief to myself and then, in a second step, evaluate it as true or false. This would be possible only if I fell apart into two persons. Wittgenstein points out that in

such a schizophrenic scenario, a sentence similar to D in the first person present tense would be possible: “It seems to me that my ego believes this, but it isn’t true” or just “It is raining and I don’t believe it” (PI, p. 201e).

From this we can learn something about what it is to be a unified subject. In the first person present tense, the descriptive and the evaluative elements do not fall apart: You do not, on the one hand, ascribe a belief to yourself (for whatever reason) and, on the other hand, evaluate it according to its relevant normative standard, namely, truth. Rather, it is the other way around: You believe that *p* because you evaluate *p* as true and therefore as something you take yourself to be committed to believe. To believe that *p* in this sense is to take a stance towards how things are. Hence, the assertion “I believe that *p*” is not a description of my mental state but an expression of the stance I take towards how things are. It is an expression of my commitment to the truth of *p*. This is why “in making a self-ascription of belief, one’s eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward – upon the world” (Evans, 1982, p. 225). You answer the question “Do I believe that *p*?” by answering the question “is *p* the case?” Richard Moran (2001) speaks in this sense about the special kind of first-person authority you speak with if you express your belief. It is not because you have better epistemic access that you know better what you believe, but because your beliefs express your view about how things are. But to have and express such a view is only possible if the descriptive and the evaluative elements do not fall apart.⁶ If the assertion “I believe

6 Moran (2001) shows that situations in which these elements do fall apart are indeed possible. It is, for example, possible that someone has reasons to believe that his son committed a crime but is unable to believe it. Such a person may utter the paradox sentence “My son committed a crime, but I don’t believe it”. But this assertion just reflects the inner struggle such a person is facing. Such cases are complex and in need of a much more in-depth discussion of what it is to be a unified subject of belief and action.

that it is raining” expresses my stance towards how things are, namely, that it is raining, then it is obvious why I contradict myself if I say at the same time that it is not raining. It is against this background of what it is to speak with first-person authority that we understand the self-contradictory character of assertions of the form A and B.⁷

3. Assertion and Supposition

In the introduction we saw that, according to Wittgenstein, Moore’s paradox can be formulated in light of the contrast between the assertion “I believe that p” and the supposition “Suppose: I believe that p”. In the case of belief, assertion and supposition appear to each have a different subject matter. In a note from the manuscripts, Wittgenstein writes: “The report ‘I believe that it’s raining’ is a report about the weather. The supposition is one about myself” (MS 136, 89b, my translation).⁸ The verb “believe” seems to have a different meaning in the context of an assertion (report) than in the context of a supposition. We saw that McGinn (2011) calls this the “real paradox”. It leads to the problem I quoted above and sets the stage for Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

88. So it seems as if the assertion “I believe” were not the assertion of what is supposed in the supposition “I believe”! (PI, p. 199e)

It would indeed be problematic if the sentence “Suppose: I

7 Moran (2001) and Schroeder (2006) show in more detail how Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox is connected to the special kind of first-person authority we have with respect to our own beliefs.

8 “Die Meldung ‘Ich glaube, es regnet’ ist eine Meldung über das Wetter. Die Annahme, eine über mich.”

believe that p” had an entirely different meaning than the assertion “I believe that p”. At the end of this section, I will examine Wittgenstein’s own description of the connection between assertion and supposition. But as already mentioned in the introduction, the problem is raised in the voice of the opponent, who is held captive in a certain philosophical view that I call the Fregean framework. In what follows, I will first introduce this philosophical view and Wittgenstein’s argument against it (i). I will then show why Moore’s paradox poses a problem for this view (ii). Finally, I will reconstruct, at least in part, Wittgenstein’s alternative view (iii).

(i) What I call the Fregean framework is basically defined by two points. (1) *The force-content distinction*: propositional content – the Fregean thought – is distinguished from judgmental or assertoric force, i. e. propositional contents are independent of the different attitudes we can have towards them, such as judging, believing, asserting etc. Propositional contents are thereby thought to be the primary truth bearers and they are expressed by sentences of the form “such-and-such is the case”. (2) *A primary act of merely entertaining a proposition*: Wittgenstein calls the idea of a basic, force-neutral act of merely entertaining a propositional content the “Fregean supposition” (RPP, p. 95e). He refers to this act by the German word “*Annahme*” which is sometimes translated as “assumption” and sometimes – as I have used it so far – as “supposition”. According to the Fregean framework, every judgment or assertion *contains* a supposition. The assertion “p”, for example, contains the same propositional content “p” that is merely supposed in the conditional “If p, then q”. In this sense, there is a straight line from supposition to assertion. Every assertion “that p” asserts what the supposition “Suppose that p” supposes. Whether this is an accurate description of Frege’s

actual position need not be addressed here.⁹ In his late essay *The Thought: A Logical Inquiry*, Frege seems to suggest at least such a picture when he writes that “two things must be distinguished in a indicative sentence: the content, which it has in common with the corresponding sentence-question, and the assertion” (Frege, 1956, 294).

In §22 of the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues against the Fregean framework and the distinction between a “mere sentence” (a sentence expressing the propositional content “such-and-such is the case”) and its use in assertions, judgments etc. (the doxastic element):

Frege’s opinion that every assertion contains an assumption, which is the thing that is asserted, really rests on the possibility, found in our language, of writing every assertoric sentence in the form “It is asserted that such-and-such is the case”. – But “that such-and-such is the case” is *not* a sentence in our language – it is not yet a *move* in the language-game. And if I write, not “It is asserted that ...”, but “It is asserted: such-and-such is the case”, the words “It is asserted” simply become superfluous. (PI, p. 14e)

The mistake of the Fregean is to assume that sentences expressing propositional contents have meaning independently and in abstraction from their concrete use in natural language. With this comes the idea of a force-neutral act of merely entertaining a proposition by grasping the sense of the sentence expressing it. This act is thought to be primary and entailed in every assertion. Yet, according to Wittgenstein, a sentence or the mere expression

9 I follow Schulte who writes that Wittgenstein does not “aim at a true interpretation of Frege’s theory; what he is interested in is the picture which holds us captive when we find it impossible to free ourselves from the model suggested by the use of the assertion sign” (Schulte, 1993, p. 140). In fact, as Maria Van der Schaar (2017) and Thomas Ricketts (1986) show, there is good textual evidence that this was never Frege’s own view.

of a proposition in a sentence of the form “such-and-such is the case” has no meaning or truth-value in abstraction from the way we use it in language. In § 23, Wittgenstein asks “how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question and command?” (PI, p. 14e). His answer: “There are *countless* kinds; countless different kinds of use of all the things we call ‘signs’, ‘words’, ‘sentences’” (PI, p. 14e). There are many different things we can do with a bit of language of the form “such-and-such is the case”: we can assert it, hope it, assume it, question it, etc. But only in its concrete use does such a bit of language have any meaning, i.e. only in its use does it become a sentence at all.

(ii) Much more could be said here to motivate Wittgenstein’s argument against the Fregean framework. But in the context of this paper, the foregoing discussion is sufficient to put us in a position to understand one of Wittgenstein’s key remarks on Moore’s paradox that can be found in the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*:

The report is a language-game with these words. It would produce confusion if we were to say: the words of the report: the words of the report – the reported sentence – have a definite sense, and the reporting – the “assertion” adds another one to it. As if the sentence, spoken by a gramophone, belonged to pure logic; as if here it had the pure logical sense; as if here we had before us the object which logicians get hold of and consider – while the sentence as asserted, reported, is what it is in *business*. As one may say: the botanist considers a rose *as a plant*, not as an ornament for a dress or room or as a delicate attention. The sentence, I want to say, has no sense outside the language-game. This hangs together with its not being a kind of *name*. As though one might say “‘I believe...’ – *that’s* how it is” pointing (as it were

inwardly) at what gives the sentence its meaning. (RPP, p. 93e)¹⁰

This remark is very rich. I will discuss the part about the logicians and the analogy with the plant in the next section. For the present purpose, it is important to note that Wittgenstein criticizes the Fregean view that the reported sentence has a “definite sense” independent of its use. Wittgenstein here again concludes that a sentence “has no sense outside the language-game”. But in this passage, Wittgenstein reveals the connection between his argument against the Fregean framework and his discussion of Moore’s paradox. In the Fregean framework, the words of a report have a definite sense on their own and the further aspect of assertion “adds another one to it”, as Wittgenstein writes. The words of the report merely express the propositional content “such-and-such is the case”. Schulte (1993) speaks in this sense about “the uniform, constant sentence meaning” of a given sentence in abstraction from its use. Given that we accept this framework, we must ask what “uniform, constant sentence meaning” the sentence “I believe that p” has in abstraction from its concrete use in the assertion “I believe that p”. What proposition does it express? Schulte (1993) shows that it is tempting to answer this question by assimilating the sentence “I believe that p” to a name and to use it as a label for an inner state:

Moreover, together with the idea of an identical “content” – which is now asserted, now supposed, now desired, now asked for – the model of a uniform, constant sentence meaning tempts us into assimilating the relevant expression (sentence radicals) to names which behave like labels indirectly indicating the designated objects. In this way Frege was tempted to conceive of sentences as names of truth values, and such an analysis could in a similar fashion lead to the mistaken conception that a sentence of the type “I believe . . .” stood for a mental state or process of

10 I follow here Schulte (1993) and translate the German word “Meldung” as “report” and not as “communiqué” as it is translated by G. E. M. Anscombe.

believing. (Schulte, 1993, p. 45.)

If we look for the constant sentence meaning of the sentence “I believe that *p*” – i.e. if we ask what proposition it expresses in abstraction from its concrete use in different language-games – we are tempted to take the assertion “I believe that *p*” to be a report about the person asserting it.¹¹ But as we saw in the last section, this is wrong. We are forced into misunderstandings. In a further remark on this topic, Wittgenstein writes: “The worst enemy of our understanding is here the idea, the picture, of a ‘sense’ of what we say, in our mind” (RPP, p. 95e). And even if the “sense” of a sentence is not in our mind, it is in any case wrong to picture the sense of a sentence independently of its concrete use, i.e. independently of what we do with it. For Wittgenstein, this is revealed by reflecting on Moore’s paradox: The line from supposition to assertion breaks down when it comes to the assertion “I believe that *p*”. There is no force-neutral sentence expressing the proposition “I believe that *p*” that is merely entertained in the supposition “Suppose: I believe that *p*” and contained in the assertion “I believe that *p*”. It is the Fregean model of judgment and assertion that lies at the bottom of the real paradox. To clear the air, it has to be rejected entirely.

11 Even if we do not rely on the dubious assimilation of sentences to names, Wittgenstein’s general line of argument can be used against a certain analysis of the sentence “I believe that *p*”, which many people today still not only take to be tempting, but even convincing. What I have in mind here is the analysis of the sentence “I believe that *p*” as expressing a relation between a person and a proposition. According to this analysis, a person can stand in different relations – the believing-relation, the hoping-relation, the judging-relation – to a propositional content. In asserting “I believe that *p*”, a person expresses the way she is related to the proposition *p*, namely, that she is believing it. But as we saw in the last section, one important result of Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox is that a person reports neither a relation, nor any other fact about herself when she asserts the sentence “I believe that *p*”. Rather, she expresses her commitment to the truth of *p*.

(iii) But what about the relation between assertion and supposition? At the end of his discussion of Moore's paradox in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein answers his opponent: "Even in the *assumption*, the pattern is not what you think" (PI, p. 201e). We are now in a position to understand this answer. We saw that Wittgenstein argues against the idea that every assertion contains a supposition. There is no neutral act of merely entertaining a thought of the form "such-and-such is the case" by grasping a sentence that expresses it. There are no such sentences. Supposing something is a language game with a certain aim and without special privilege. In the contrary, as Wittgenstein writes:

With the words "Assuming I believe . . ." you are presupposing the whole grammar of the word "to believe", the ordinary use, which you have mastered. – You are not assuming some state of affairs which, so to speak, a picture presents unambiguously to you, so that you can tack on to this assumption some assertion other than the ordinary one. – You would not know at all what you were assuming here (that is, what, for example, would follow from such an assumption), if you were not already familiar with the use of "believe". (PI, p. 201e)

Assertion and supposition stand in an asymmetrical relation to each other; you can play the game of supposing only if you can play the game of asserting. It would be impossible to understand what it is to suppose something without understanding what it is to assert it. A child may first learn to use the verb "believe" to assert what he or she believes. This first step enables the child to learn to use the more complex sentence "Suppose, I believe . . ." This is not a statement about the actual process of learning how to use the verb "believe". The two steps may go hand in hand. But if Wittgenstein's argument is sound, it is impossible for a child to learn the meaning of the verb "believe" from using it in suppositions alone without using it to express its own

commitment about what is the case.¹²

Schulte takes it to be Wittgenstein's main point to argue against the idea that the word "believe" has a uniform meaning. According to him, it is important to recognize that this word is used differently in different contexts and that it has a different meaning in the language game of supposition than it does in the language game of assertion. The danger with this position is that, even if it is not Schulte's intention, one could think that the word "believe" is used, on the one hand, to report a given mental state in the game of supposition (and in its use to ascribe past beliefs or to ascribe beliefs to others) and it is used, on the other hand, to report the fact believed (in its use in the first person indicative present). But this would not take seriously the dependence of the game of supposition on the game of assertion. In a remark from the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein tries to shed some light on this dependence through an analogy with the expression of pain:

479. "Suppose I have pain ..." – that is not an expression of pain and so it is not a piece of pain-behaviour.

The child who learns the word "pain" as a cry, and who then learns to tell of a past pain – one fine day this child may declare: "If I have a pain, the doctor comes." Now has the meaning of the word "pain" changed in this process of learning the word? It has altered its employment; but one must guard carefully against interpreting this change as a change of object corresponding to the word. (RPP, p. 92e)

12 In analogy to the relation of the use of the sentences "I wish . . ." and "Suppose: I wish . . .", Wittgenstein writes: "Can one understand the supposition that I wish for something before understanding the expression of a wish? – The child learns first to express a wish, and only later to make the supposition that it wished for such-and-such" (RPP, p. 92e).

The last sentence is very important: We don't use the words "I am in pain" to report but to express the feeling of pain. If a child learns to use the word to talk hypothetically about pain or to talk about past pains, this does *not* change the subject matter. The child does not learn to report feelings rather than to express them. Rather, what the child learns is a more complex use of the word "pain", which depends on an understanding of what it is to express pain. Understanding sentences like "Suppose: I am in pain" is understanding what it would be to express pain.

The same holds true for belief. I do not assert what is the case but instead speak about myself if I say "Suppose: I believe that it is raining". In this sense, the supposition is different from the assertion "I believe, that it is raining", which is also the assertion that it rains. But it would be wrong to take the supposition to say something along the following lines: "Suppose: I am in the mental state of believing that it is raining" or "Suppose: I have the disposition of believing that it is raining". Rather, we understand the supposition only with respect to what it would be to express a commitment in the primary assertoric use of the word "believe". Understanding the sentence "Suppose: I believe that p" requires an understanding of what it would be to take a certain stance towards how things are. And only against this background of what it would be to take a certain stance towards how things are – for example, the weather – does it make sense to think about the consequences of such a commitment, for example, that one brings an umbrella. The connection here is not causal: I do not say that if I believed it is raining, I would be in a mental state that would cause a certain behavior, namely, bringing an umbrella. Rather, the connection is rational: If I took it to be the case that it is raining, I would have reasons to bring an umbrella.

Wittgenstein's opponent asks the right kind of question: How do we explain that the assertion "I believe that p" asserts what the supposition "Suppose: I believe that p" supposes?

And Wittgenstein points in the direction of an answer. But his answer is very different from the general view of his opponent. Wittgenstein rejects the idea of a basic act of merely entertaining a proposition, which is contained in every assertion. It is rather the other way around: I can only entertain a proposition if I know what it is to assert it as true. In the same spirit, I think, we could formulate an account of our own past beliefs and the beliefs of other people. A full discussion of these issues lies beyond the scope of this paper; I can at most gesture in its direction. One can only ascribe beliefs to one's past self or to someone else if one understands one's past beliefs or the beliefs of another person as a subjective stance towards how things are. What it is to take a subjective stance towards how things are, i.e. to speak with subjective authority, is known from the primary case of the use of the verb "believe" in the first person present tense. Only by means of such an understanding can we know what it was for my past self and what it is for another person to have beliefs. And only if I take another person to express her stance towards how things are can I disagree with her. Much more would need to be said here, for example, about the difference between ascribing beliefs to my past self and to another person. But the important point is that the ascription of beliefs to my past self or to another person is mediated by the use of the verb "believe" in the first person present tense and is not simply a description of someone's mental state or disposition.

4. Moore's Paradox and the Nature of Logic

Let me come back to the question concerning why, according to Wittgenstein, Moore's paradox shows something about the nature of logic. The Fregean framework goes hand in hand with a certain understanding of the subject matter of logic. This connection is illustrated in the key passage from the *Remarks of the Philosophy of Psychology* I cited in the previous section:

As if the sentence, spoken by a gramophone, belonged to pure logic; as if here it had the pure logical sense; as if here we had before us the object which logicians get hold of and consider – while the sentence as asserted, reported, is what it is in *business*. As one may say: the botanist considers a rose *as a plant*, not as an ornament for a dress or room or as a delicate attention. (RPP, p. 93e)

The analogy with the botanist is instructive. We take the botanist to study the nature of the plant in abstraction and independently of how we use plants in everyday life, for example, as ornaments. The botanist is concerned with the essence of the plant as plant. Analogous to this picture of the botanist, the logician focuses only on the essential logical properties of sentences expressing propositional contents in abstraction and independent of their concrete use in different language games. The logician takes such sentences to be essentially truth-apt and truth-functionally related to each other. The study of the concrete use of such sentences belongs not to logic but to some other science such as linguistics or empirical psychology. In criticizing the Fregean framework, Wittgenstein is also criticizing this narrow understanding of logic that assumes its subject matter consists only in sentences that appear as if “spoken by a gramophone”. Such sentences are an illusion. There are only sentences spoken and used by people in different language games and for varying purposes. This does not mean that formal logic has no use; rather, it doesn’t have the fundamental status logicians think it has, and its subject matter is intrinsically related to the concrete use of natural language.

We are now in a position to understand why Wittgenstein took Moore’s paradox to show that “logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is.” In his letter to Moore, Wittgenstein writes about sentences of the form A and B:

This *assertion* has to be ruled out and *is* ruled out by

“common sense”, just as a contradiction is. And this just shows that logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is. In particular: that contradiction isn’t the *unique* thing people think it is. (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 365)

According to the logicians Wittgenstein is criticizing, the contradiction “p and not-p” has a fundamental role in logic: If a sentence that expresses a proposition is essentially truth-apt, then the conjunction with its negation is necessarily false. The fundamental role of a contradiction can be demonstrated in abstraction from the role a contradiction plays in the use of a natural language. That we should not contradict ourselves in thought and language can then be derived from the fact that a sentence of the form “p and not-p” is necessarily false. It is in this sense that the contradiction is taken to be a “*unique* thing”.

In contrast to this picture, Wittgenstein believes a contradiction needs to be understood by reference to the role it plays in natural language, namely, that it is *useless*. In a note from the manuscripts, Wittgenstein writes: “A contradiction prevents me from starting to do something in a language game” (MS 133b, my translation).¹³ In a language game, no move is made by a contradiction and no move can follow from it. This is why it has to be ruled out by “common sense”. But the same holds for sentences of the form of A and B. In arguing against a narrow understanding of logic, Wittgenstein is arguing in favor of an alternative picture of logic as a grammatical investigation. In this sense, a reflection on the reasons why a contradiction is ruled out from its use in language is a logical, i.e. grammatical reflection. But it is no more fundamental or unique than a reflection on Moore’s paradox or any grammatical reflection on the use of language. In this broader understanding of logic as a grammatical investigation, reflecting on Moore’s paradox is doing logic, i.e. it is a reflection on the

13 “Ein Widerspruch verhindert mich, im Sprachspiel zur Tat zu kommen.”

logic of the way we speak and think. And there is no other, more fundamental logic than this one. As Wittgenstein writes in a note related to his discussion of Moore's paradox: "Who would believe that what I'm doing here, even if in a very clumsy way, is logic" (MS 136 86b, my translation).¹⁴

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¹⁴ "Wer würde glauben, daß ich hier, wenn auch sehr unbeholfen, Logik treibe." I thank Gilad Nir, Gino Margani and Maria van der Schaar for helpful comments and Aaron Shoichet for proofreading this paper.

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The Relation between Logic and Mathematics: A Comparison of the Views in *Tractatus* with Frege and Russell's views

Evgeni Latinov Latinov

Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“,
elatinov@phls.uni-sofia.bg

Abstract: *Frege and Russell's view on the relation between logic and mathematics is often referred to as logicism. The logicism's main claim is that mathematics is part of logic. Wittgenstein is not a logicist, and in a sense, his views on logic and mathematics are diametrically opposed to those of Frege and Russell. However, as far as the relationship between the two areas is concerned, Wittgenstein seems closer to the logicism than to the prevailing modern view since logic and mathematics are closely connected in the Tractatus. I will outline and compare three views on the relation between logic and mathematics: 1) the logicist view as represented by the logical and mathematical systems of Frege and of Russell; 2) the prevailing contemporary view; 3) Wittgenstein's view in the Tractatus.*

Key words: *Wittgenstein, Tractatus, logicism, Frege, Russell*

I will begin by pointing to what I consider the main features of three views on the relation between logic and mathematics. Then I will elaborate on them.

Characteristic of Frege and Russell's view is that both logic

and mathematics are considered real *theories*. Their sentences are viewed as stating something about the world, about how things are. That is, for logicism, logic and mathematics are not fundamentally different from the other theories, such as physics, chemistry, etc. What distinguishes them is their extreme generality. According to the founders of the modern logic, logic is the ultimate science about all properties and relations in general. They believe mathematics is a part of logic because it reduces to set theory and sets reduce to properties and relations.

By contrast, according to the prevailing contemporary view, mathematics is a theory but logic is not because it consists of all logically valid sentences (of all tautologies in Wittgenstein's terms) and these sentences are true no matter how things are. On the contrary, mathematics contains sentences that are not logically valid, whose truth values depend on how things are. In other words, unlike the sentences of logic, the sentences of mathematics have contents. Since mathematics is a theory and logic is not, mathematics cannot be a part of logic.

According to Wittgenstein, neither logic nor mathematics are theories. One of the most important claims of the *Tractatus* is that logic consists of tautologies – this view has established itself as the modern view on logic. The view has as a consequence that logic is not a theory. However, for Wittgenstein mathematics also is not a theory – he believes that its sentences, like the sentences of logic, are (theoretically) meaningless.

We have the following three views on logic and mathematics. For Frege and Russell, both logic and mathematics are theories about certain abstract objects. According to the prevailing modern understanding, mathematics is a theory about certain abstract objects but logic is not a theory at all. For Wittgenstein, neither logic nor mathematics are theories. Frege's and Russell's view, on the one hand, and Wittgenstein's, on the other, are at the two extremes and that is precisely why they all (Frege, Russell

and Wittgenstein) closely connect, even identify, logic and mathematics.

In what follows, I will elaborate on these three views. I'm starting with Frege and Russell's view.

In itself, the view that mathematics is logic seems strange. Ever since its origin, logic has been related to *every possible* claim to speak the truth, i.e. to every possible theory and every possible argument in *every* field. On the contrary, mathematics has a limited subject area. How is it possible to think that mathematics is logic? The answer seems to be in two parts.

The first is that, according to Frege and Russell, every possible predicate denotes a certain abstract object, which we may call a *property* or *relation*. For example, the predicate "planet" denotes the property of *being a planet*, the predicate "relative" denotes the relation between two relatives, etc. Although logic abstracts itself from any particular content, from any particular theory in any particular field, it cannot abstract itself from the fact that in every claim to speak the truth properties or relations are affirmed or denied of entities. Viewed in that way, logic seems to be the most general theory, not about some specific objects, properties and relations, but of objects, properties and relationships *in general*. This understanding explains how logic can be thought as a theory about certain abstract entities (any property or relation).

The second part of the answer is that in the late 19th century set theory emerged and it became clear that all mathematical objects (relations, functions, numbers, etc.) can be thought of as sets and all mathematical truths boil down to truths about sets, in short – mathematics reduces to set theory. The abstract entities of sets, however, are very closely related to the abstract entities of properties and relations, which, in turn, are the subject of logic as Frege and Russell understand it. Combining the two parts, we have the following: 1) mathematics is a theory about sets; 2) sets are reduced to properties or relations in general; 3) logic is

the theory of properties and relationships in general. Therefore, mathematics is part of logic.

I have been referring to the abstract objects of logic (as the logicism views it) as *properties* and *relations*. Now I am going to get into some more details about them. Frege calls them “concepts” and defines them as functions that have individuals as arguments and *the truth* or *the falsehood* as values (also abstract entities). These functions are intensional, which means that two of them can have the same values for the same arguments and still be distinct. To each of them a particular object is closely related – the *set* of the things that fall under the concept (that the function has the value *truth* for¹⁵). The only formally important difference between concepts (i.e. properties and relationships) and sets is that if some sets have the same elements, they are necessarily identical (the same set), while two different concepts can have the same things falling under them. In effect, the system of *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* uses the language of second-order predicate logic, in which every predicate denotes an entity (the corresponding concept). Additionally Frege provides by an axiom (which he considers logical truth) that every concept corresponds to a set – the set of the things falling under the concept. This second assumption (combined with the second order language used) leads to Russell’s paradox and makes the system contradictory.

As for *Principia Mathematica* (Russell and Whitehead’s logical and mathematical system), properties and relations are also treated as functions, which are called *propositional functions* and are somewhat different from Frege’s. Like Frege’s concepts, they are intensional functions but except individuals they can also have other propositional functions as arguments. Also, they do not have *the truth* or *the falsehood* as values but *propositions* – abstract entities corresponding to sentences’ meanings. Like

15 Sets can also be viewed as functions – then they are the extensional counterparts of the intensional functions of concepts.

Frege's system, the system of *Principia mathematica* provides for every predicate (including compound ones) a corresponding propositional function (a property or relation). However, *Principia Mathematica* avoids the paradoxes by treating predicates that do not agree with Russell's Theory of types as meaningless and so failing to refer to anything. Moreover, Russell and Whitehead identify sets with propositional functions. More precisely, the former are contextually defined in terms of the latter. In that way talking about sets boils down to talking about propositional functions, i.e. properties or relations.

Now I am turning to the prevailing contemporary view on the relation between logic and mathematics. A crucial difference with Frege and Russell's understanding is that today logic is not committed to an ontology of abstract entities (the properties and relations). The standard logical language now is that of first-order predicate calculus, in which predicates *do not denote*. The only symbols that refer to entities in it are the singular terms, most notably the bound individual variables. For example, if I say "Some cats are black" using the formalized language of first-order predicate logic, I commit myself only to the existence of black cats. I do not commit myself to the existence of the property of being black or the property of being a cat, nor to the existence of the set of all black things or the set of all cats. Of course, one may commit oneself to the existence of these abstract entities but this has to be done explicitly, by another sentence in which the properties or sets in question are denoted by singular terms, not by predicates. So, the mere usage of the language does not entail the existence of the abstract entities of properties and relations as Frege and Russell believed.

As far as mathematics is concerned, the modern understanding is that it reduces to set theory. The official formalized language of set theory, and thus of mathematics in general, is again the language of first-order predicate calculus. In contrast, the

languages of Frege's and Russell's logical and mathematical systems are not of first order. As remarked earlier, Frege's symbolism uses in effect the language of *second-order* predicate calculus and orders in Russell's theory of types are unlimited. Generally, the order of a formal language is higher than first if and only if the predicate symbols denote things. So, from the point of view of *the way the formalized language is used*, today neither logic, nor set theory, nor mathematics in general are committed to the existence of abstract entities. However, from the point of view of *what is stated explicitly in a theory*, set theory, and hence mathematics as a whole, are committed to the existence of abstract entities, namely sets, but this is done explicitly through axioms. An important point is that these axioms *are not logically valid sentences* (they are not tautologies in Wittgenstein's terms) and since, by definition, logic is considered consisting of all logically valid sentences, mathematics *is not* considered part of logic. Logic and mathematics are now separated.

I am turning to the *Tractatus* now. It contains the then novel (and very important) thesis that only the elementary sentences in a language correspond or do not correspond *directly* to the world. All other sentences say something about the world only *through* the medium of the elementary sentences since they are explained as truth functions of them. Another novel thesis (also very important and connected with the first) is that logical sentences do not say something about the world since they are always true regardless of the truth values of the elementary sentences. A consequence of the second thesis is that logic is not a theory. Wittgenstein makes a further step – he declares its sentences (theoretically) meaningless.

As stated earlier, one of the reasons to get to the view that mathematics is part of logic was the understanding that every pre-dicate denotes something. It commits logic to an ontology of abstract entities from which sets can be obtained. This view

is partly available in the *Tractatus*. According to Wittgenstein, possibility of language requires every part of each elementary sentence to denote something. While it is not clear what exactly are the sentences Wittgenstein regards as elementary, we have little choice but to think of them *at least formally* in the way we think of the atomic sentences in predicate logic, namely as combinations of singular terms and predicates. So, if we take as a hypothetical example of an elementary sentence “This is black”, according to the Tractarian picture theory of meaning both the singular term “this” and the predicate “is black” have to denote something – two of the Tractarian objects (die Gegenstände). Therefore, Wittgenstein preserves the key presupposition of the logicism, at least in part. The meaning of each sentence reduces to the meanings of a set of elementary sentences, and for an elementary sentence to have meaning, it is necessary, according to Wittgenstein, each part of it to refer to an object. In this way, that every *simple* predicate refers to an object is a necessary condition for each sentence to have a meaning. (This presupposition is not available in the contemporary approach, where the truth conditions of the elementary (atomic) sentences are defined à la Tarski in a way that only singular terms refer to things.)

However, there is an important difference between Wittgenstein’s view and Frege and Russell’s position in this regard. Only the *elementary* predicates have to denote things according to Wittgenstein. In contrast, Frege’s and Russell’s logical and mathematical systems assume that *every meaningful* predicate corresponds to a property or relation. More specifically, for every expressible condition (i.e. every simple or *compound* predicate) in Frege’s symbolism there exist a corresponding concept (a property or relation) and a corresponding set. Similarly, the system of *Principia mathematica* ensures that for every possible predicate that agrees with Russell’s theory of types there exists a corresponding property or relation (a propositional function). So,

this key logicist assumption is available in Wittgenstein's treatise but it is considerably weakened as it applies only to elementary predicates (predicates in elementary sentences).

As for the Tractarian philosophy of mathematics, it is quite fragmentary. It concerns only the arithmetic operations of addition and multiplication on natural numbers. For Wittgenstein, mathematical sentences are equations and he believes that equations are meaningless pseudo-sentences. This belief seems connected with the *Tractatus*' principle discussed above that an elementary sentence has a meaning only if each of its parts refers to something. The identity (equation) sign is a simple predicate, so it has to refer to something, which according to Wittgenstein is not the case because logical words do not denote things ("There are no logical objects" – 4.441, 5.4). He thinks that in the complete logical analysis, different simple symbols refer to different objects and the same symbols refer to the same objects. As a result, again in the mysterious "complete analysis"¹⁶, the fact that something is identical to something or that something is different from something could only *be shown* by the fact that the symbols used are the same symbols or different symbols – it could not *be expressed* by a sentence, and equations are sentences. Accordingly, they are declared meaningless.

The *Tractatus* philosophy of mathematics can be characterized as a *formalism* in contrast to the *realism* (or *Platonism*) of Frege and Russell. For Wittgenstein, mathematics is not a theory about objects (whether abstract or not) – it results from operations on language expressions. Mathematics and logic are closely related, first, because their sentences are pseudo-sentences, and secondly, because they are united by the concept of *calculation*, the basis of which is the concept of *operation*. Wittgenstein understands operations as being only applicable to language expressions the

16 If it were clear what the complete logical analysis is, it would be clear which sentences are elementary.

result of the application being also a language expression. In logic, in particular, there is only one such operation – negation. It applies to an arbitrary set of sentences thereby yielding a new sentence, which is true if and only if all of the initial sentences are false. The operation is firstly applied to elementary sentences and then to the results of the previous applications. In this way, all compound sentences come into being and are functions of elementary sentences.¹⁷

In a sense, in the *Tractatus* mathematics is more general than logic because numbers are thought to be *a generalization of the notion of iteration of any operation*. They are obtained from the concept of the iterative application of *any* operation, whereas the sentences of logic (the tautologies) result from the iterations of a single operation – uniform negation.

Usually, natural numbers are obtained by sequentially adding the number 1 – again and again – starting from zero. In the *Tractatus*, to the addition of 1 (the successor relation) corresponds the application of *any* operation to the result of a previous application of the same operation. For example, if we start from an elementary sentence (imagine that it corresponds to 0) and negate it, the negation would correspond to 1; if we negate the negated sentence, the result will correspond to 2, and so on. For Wittgenstein, however, numbers are not associated with a particular operation (such as the successor operation or negation), but *with any possible operation*. If we limit ourselves only to the operation of negation for example, it would turn out that 2 equals 0, because each sentence is logically equivalent to the negation

17 A significant difference between logic in the *Tractatus* and the standard propositional and predicate logics is that it allows for *infinite* conjunctions, disjunctions, etc. This is so since Wittgenstein's negation operation presupposes the concept of a set (what is negated are all the sentences in a set), and sets can be infinite. As a result, this logic allows for the *explicit* definition (not just the recursive one) of "natural number" in terms "successor" – something impossible in the standard logic.

of its negation. 2 does not equal 0 because numbers have to do with *any* operation, and it is not true that the application of any operation to the result of a previous application always yields the thing we started from.

Logic and mathematics for Wittgenstein do not have their own sentences since these sentences would be meaningless. However, logic and mathematics are practically useful with regard to sentences that do not belong to logic or mathematics since they enable us to draw inferences between such sentences. The benefit of mathematics is that it makes possible to infer certain non-mathematical sentences from other non-mathematical sentences. For example, from the sentence “In each of my trousers pockets there are 2 Euros” I may infer the sentence “In my trousers pockets there are 4 Euros in total”. Intuitively, the reason for the inference is the equation “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” but according to Wittgenstein it is a pseudo-sentence which it is not needed (as a sentence) for the inference. The basis of the inference is a certain rule of iterative application of any operation, which is implicitly contained in the equation. Namely, that applying any operation two times in a row and then applying it again two times in a row yields the same thing we would get if we applied it four times in a row.

The Tractarian philosophy of mathematics does not have the success of the Tractarian philosophy of logic. Wittgenstein’s view on logic, unlike his view on mathematics, has become the common view. At the same time, Frege and Russell’s view on mathematics, unlike their view on logic, is (and perhaps has always been) the common view. I mean the view that mathematics is a *theory* about certain abstract objects – sets, functions, numbers, etc. Both Frege and Russell, on the one hand, and Wittgenstein, on the other, unite logic and mathematics but for quite different reasons. For Frege and Russell they are real theories about certain abstract entities. For Wittgenstein neither logic nor mathematics are theories. Historically, what prevailed was Frege and Russell’s

view on mathematics, not on logic, and Wittgenstein's view on logic, not on mathematics. The result is that logic and mathematics are separated now as they have always been.

Wittgenstein, Metalogic and Meaning

Marco Marchesin

University of East Anglia, M.Marchesin@uea.ac.uk

Abstract: *In this paper, I want to explore what it means for meaning not to be a metalogical concept. The concept of metalogic caught Wittgenstein's attention in the early '30s. What he meant was prima facie unclear, as the concept risks being confused with what we are used to call metalogic nowadays. Despite the obvious affinities, the two are quite separate notions. I will then first explore what is for Wittgenstein metalogic, and why more generally we need to refuse it in our investigations of the grammar of language. I will argue that the refutation of metalogic in the early '30s is related to Wittgenstein's new methodology and is part of his general move to get out of the Tractatus's muddles. Second, I will try to highlight what it means for meaning to be a non-metalogical concept. I can already anticipate that it is a matter of conceiving its unity as a family of cases rather than through a univocal definition, as when we say that meaning is a normative notion. Finally, I will argue that a correct understanding of meaning as a non-metalogical concept can bring about troubles to those interpretations, such as Baker and Hacker's, which surprisingly overlook such an important detail in Wittgenstein's philosophy. As a result, we should rather conceive meaning, what we mean when we use the word meaning, beyond the boundaries of any normative conception that consider meanings only as equivalent to the correct use of our words.*

Key words: *Wittgenstein, Metalogic, Meaning, Philosophical Investigations, Onomatopoeias, Sound, Rules, Hacker*

Introduction

In the writings of the early '30s we find Wittgenstein repeatedly engaging with the concept of *metalogic*. There are in total 34 entries of the term in the *Nachlass*, the most included in the typescripts constituting the collections *Philosophical Grammar* and *Big Typescript*. The concept figures as well in the students' notes of Wittgenstein's lectures lately edited and published. Finally, it is worth mentioning also the transcriptions of the conversations with Waismann, edited by Gordon Baker and published in 2003 as *The Voices of Wittgenstein* (from now on, VoW). Despite its controversial nature, as we cannot really know how much of Wittgenstein is contained in these notes without the distorting lens of Waismann own philosophical agenda, yet the text contains the most explicit references to metalogic we can appeal to. Relevantly, both lectures materials and *Nachlass* entries were mostly written between 1930 and 1933, and apart from the important exception of Z 284 (that anyway is a restatement of an older remark), there is no trace of the term in later writings.

Now, to give a quick overview, Wittgenstein mainly uses the term *metalogic* to talk about *depiction* (MWL, pp. 141-142, BT 64), *rules* and *games* (PG 72, MS 153), the word *fundamental* (BT 63, BT 88), *agreement with reality* (BT 46), *generality* (LWL p. 84, PG 72) *meaning* (as *Bedeutung*), *proposition* and *world* (MWL pp. 316, 318, AWL 27, p.31), *calculus* (PG 72, LWL p. 92), *meaning* (as *Meinung*), *understanding* (BT 1, BT 4, Z 284, PG 8, MS 114), *sense* and *nonsense* (AWL, p. 21). All these concepts are resolutely said to be *non-metalogical*. Hilmy (1987) argued that Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic is relative only to psychological concepts, such as meaning and understanding, but this clearly does not seem to exhaust all the recurrence of the term in the *Nachlass*¹⁸. Apart from psychological concepts,

18 Hans Johann Glock, for instance, pointed out the same in his *Dictionary* (Glock 1997, p. 245), as well as Kuusela (Kuusela 2008, p. 334).

we find linguistic notions (*proposition*), traditional philosophical formulas (*agreement with reality, fundamental*), *Tractarian* concepts (*depiction, world*) and, crucially, the very words that seem to constitute the foundations of Wittgenstein's conception of language in the *Investigations*, such as *calculus, game* and *rules*. The rejection of metalogic seems then to be *general* and involves a number of different concepts that *prima facie* does not seem to have something in common that would allow us to understand what Wittgenstein is after while rejecting their metalogical status.

The aim of this paper is thus twofold. On one hand, I shall illustrate what does really mean to reject metalogical concepts and adhere to a philosophical project that does not rely on any metalogic, as Wittgenstein wants to assume. On the other hand, consistently with the idea of philosophy and logic emerged in the first part of the paper, I will show what it means for linguistic *meaning* to be *not* metalogical, an aspect surprisingly overlooked in the literature, as in the case of Baker and Hacker's notorious interpretation.

1. Rejecting Metalogic

It is far way easier to understand what metalogic is *not* in Wittgenstein. Nowadays, metalogic is a well-established branch of contemporary logic. It can be viewed as a 'second-order' reflection *about* any system of logical rules, aiming to prove some general logical properties of such systems, such as *completeness* or *consistency* (See Hunter 1971). Historically, metalogic has to be traced back into Hilbert's formalist approach to mathematics, as well as into the works of Warsaw logicians on *metalanguage* and truth, and both these traditions are cited by Rudolf Carnap in his *Logical Syntax of Language*, where they contribute to his attempt to develop a fully operative *metalanguage* (what Carnap calls indeed *syntax of language*) for the language of science (Carnap 1937). If we take Wittgenstein to reject metalogic understood in

this sense, it is tempting to conclude that Wittgenstein was simply wrong, as nothing is to be rejected in contemporary metalogic as long as metalogic is a perfectly legitimate branch of modern logic as a well-established discipline. It is then crucial to stress that the word has an *idiosyncratic* meaning in Wittgenstein's writings, rather distant from its contemporary sense. To prove this point, it is almost sufficient to say that these remarks are contemporary, and in some cases *precede*, Tarski's work on metalanguage and Carnap's *Syntax*¹⁹. Nevertheless, it is far from clear what this sense might be, and what role it plays overall in the development of Wittgenstein's thought. I will argue that it ultimately consists in a form of *anti-essentialism* whose nature is strictly intertwined with Wittgenstein's *anti-dogmatism* and his abandonment of *logical hierarchies* and *metaphilosophy*.

1.1 Essence

In a not precisely dated²⁰ entry in the 1930 lectures' notes edited by John King and Desmond Lee - arguably one of the very first passages on metalogic - Wittgenstein defines metalogic through the notion of *generality*:

What we investigate is one particular game or another, not games *in general* or something *metalogical*. We need not recapitulate the rule as we play - we use words without looking them up. If you give the rule you are doing all you can (LWL, p. 84, my italics).

This remark is pivotal, insofar as metalogic is both defined through generality and is introduced to highlight an essential

19 It is reasonable to argue that this interest in metalogic grew in the context of the conversations Wittgenstein had within the Vienna Circle in the early '30. As a proof, the word appears several times in *VoW*. It is nevertheless hard to tell whether Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic is *directly* related in any way with Carnap's struggle to design the rules of the logical syntax of language.

20 The notes report a vague 'academic year 1931 - 1932'.

feature of Wittgenstein's *methodology*: his philosophy does not start from the general, rather it looks for *concrete* examples of our concepts; it starts from *there* to investigate language. We do not need a general concept of what is a game to describe chess or football: we simply describe them, and we are legitimated to do it. This discussion, arguably, already anticipates Wittgenstein's introduction of *family resemblance* concepts in the *Investigations*, as long as the notion of *game* is involved.

We can also say that in this passage the rejection of metalogic is shaped as a rejection of what in the *Blue Book* is called 'our *craving* for *generality*' (BB p. 17): we can get by without it, generality is not a *necessary* requirement or goal for logical investigation. We should be cautious though to interpret the rejection of metalogic so defined as an invitation to completely abandon every kind of *generalization* while doing logical investigations. This is hard to accept, for the obvious fact that any description requires a good amount of generalization and there is nothing inherently problematic about that. If I need to describe a concrete example of a game - chess, for instance - I can well say it is a *board game*, and being a board game is obviously a *general* description supposedly valid for *more* than a single game. Furthermore, the very concept of game *is* general, for it can be obviously predicated of many different activities. Rather, the metalogical Wittgenstein is inviting us to dismiss is not generality *tout court*, but a peculiar *kind* of generality. Arguably, the generality we look for is the one family resemblance concepts like game or language do *not* have: the one that is captured by a *definition* capable of grasping a fixed *commonality* among the things falling under the same concept. This definition requires to be *exceptionless*, as there *cannot* be any case falling *outside* the requirements it sets up that is nonetheless recognizable as a legitimate instance of the concept in question. The rejection of metalogic is thus to be understood as the abandonment of the logical need to start

philosophical investigations from general hidden definitions supposedly unveiling the essence of our concepts.

In fact, the kind of generality that metalogic ultimately comes to be is paired up with the metaphysical concept of *essence*. After all, what is essential is exactly what is in *common* among different instances falling under the same category. An exceptionless definition is such only if it is able to capture this commonality. According to Gordon Baker's insightful analysis of Wittgenstein's use of the term *metaphysics*, metaphysics in Wittgenstein still has to be regarded as the science of *essences* of things and of *necessary* truths (Baker, 2004, p. 97). This claim is confirmed also explicitly by Wittgenstein himself, as in the conversations with Waismann we find metaphysics defined as 'the science of pseudo-beings, ethereal essences' (VoW, p. 485). The notion of *essence* helps us also understand Wittgenstein's swift remark in *The Big Typescript*, where he claims that 'as there is no metaphysics there is no metalogic' (BT 1, p. 3), so relating the two notions: a philosophy fighting against the bewitchments of metaphysics is a philosophy not grounded onto a quest for exceptionless definitions of concepts like *language*, *sense*, *proposition* or *game*, a quest for the common features warranting the unity of such concepts, in this sense for their *essence*. It is a philosophy that does not start from laying down definitions able to survey any possible case under examination, rather, it articulates *a case to case investigation* of single instances of concepts whose generality is understood through the lens of family resemblance, acquiring the status of an alternative *model* for conceptual unity to essences.

1.2 Dogmatism

The second aspect of metalogic that figures in Wittgenstein's text is linked to *dogmatism*. In an entry dated April 27, 1931, George Edward Moore writes in his notes of Wittgenstein's lectures

an important remark that helps us see clearly the relationship between metalogic and dogmatism:

Suppose we say: ‘A proposition is a picture’. What sort of statement is this?

Is it metalogical?

No. What’s the good of making it?

We’re saying: the word ‘picture’ *follows similar rules* with word ‘proposition’.

I’d much rather say that “A proposition is a picture” is misleading.

It just stresses a *certain aspect* of grammar of word “proposition”. (MWL, P. 141-142, my italics)

This point is addressed in the *Big Typescript* as well, when Wittgenstein claims that the concept of *depiction* is not metalogical (BT 64, p. 223). The explicit target of this passage is the *Tractatus* and its claim that ‘proposition is a picture of reality’ (TLP 4.01). Such a claim is not metalogical, Wittgenstein is reported to state, and its non-metalogical nature is qualified through its *usefulness* to highlight a certain aspect of the grammar of the word *proposition*, an aspect shared by both pictures and propositions that are said to be logically similar, though not identical. Arguably, what in the *Tractatus* worked as a pivotal *thesis* about the essence of the proposition, now, according to Wittgenstein’s intentions, it seems to work more as a *tool* through which a particular *comparison* between propositions and pictures is set up. No metaphysical truth is asserted, no reductionist thesis of some kind about propositions as constituting a logical subset of the concept of picture is elaborated. Rather, we *compare* propositions and pictures and see whether such a comparison is fruitful to clarify some aspects of the use of the word, without the need to reach any hasty conclusions about the nature – or essence – of the concepts involved.

I argue that this passage clearly links the rejection of metalogic to dogmatism because it fits surprisingly well how

dogmatism is conceived in the *Investigations*. Indeed, dogmatism in the *Investigations* is defined as the tendency to misconceive a mere object of comparison as ‘a *preconception* to which reality *must* correspond’ (PI 131). This is what we do (and the *Tractatus* did) when we legitimately say that propositions are pictures, but then we move on and demand that *every* proposition, as such, *must* be a picture. When we misconceive an object of comparison as a preconception, as dogmatists are used to do, we then go astray *metalogically*, that is, we confuse a suggestion for a comparison highlighting some aspects of the logic of concepts with a claim unveiling some universal truths on language. Arguably, the possibility of making a comparison is understood by Wittgenstein as logically *prior* to the metalogical claim, as the latter stems out only as a misunderstanding of the nature of the former. The metaphysician catches the similarity between the terms of the things he compares and is misleadingly led to think that such a similarity *constitutes* the essence of the term compared, so that every other use of the term in question *must* share the common element so discovered. All in all, we can see how the notions of essence, dogmatism and modality (the logical *must* of our preconceptions) are strictly intertwined to shape the same attitude and method toward logical investigations, whose core is the very notion of metalogic.

It is important to notice that the rejection of metalogic and dogmatism does not necessarily involve a radical reshape of *what* we say, that is, it is not supposed to be an abandonment of a system of inadequate – maybe false - propositions in favour of a *new* more suitable one. Rather, it is all a matter of *how* we look at their employment, how we use such propositions in the wide context of logical clarification. What is at stake is *the same* string of signs, that Wittgenstein is inviting us to *see* differently, or as he states, ‘in the proper spirit’ (BT 88 p. 204). In this case, quite obviously, we should not take the *Tractarian* propositions as *true*

(metaphysical) *claims* that is supposed to reveal the *essence* of propositions, but only as a suggestion for a fruitful *comparison* able to unveil some important aspects of the use of the word *proposition*. Dogmatism is not something inherent to logic, as if there were inherently dogmatic concepts we should discard in our quest for clarification. Rather, dogmatism is a flaw in the eyes of the philosopher incapable of taking a comparison for what it really is. It is the philosopher to be dogmatic, not our language. Ultimately, the abandonment of metalogic, in this context, can be defined as a passage from the formulation of true claims about the supposedly ultimate nature of things to the employment of such claims as terms of comparison.

1.3 Logical Hierarchies

While addressing metalogic in relation to generality and essence, we incidentally already came across the idea that philosophy should not start from the definitions of important words, such as proposition, to build up logic from those. Now, the idea that words like *proposition* or *world* – in the *Tractatus* manner - need to be defined *first* so that *then* we can start describing the logic of language is grounded on the simple idea that, for some reasons, such words are more *important*, logically or philosophically. In the early '30, Wittgenstein repeatedly investigates this assumption. This remark from Lee's notes is helpful to understand which concepts are involved in the discussion and Wittgenstein's general attitude towards them:

Are words like grammar, language, proposition, rule, calculus, mathematics, logic and so on on a *different level* from others? We discuss these in philosophy, but not words like table, chair and so on. Are the second type on a *different level*? No! (LWL p. 92, my italics).

According to this passage, there are no different levels in language between concepts. The words Wittgenstein mentions

are those he mainly uses in his later writings to clarify language, words then that can be seen as more important, on a different level as long as Wittgenstein relies massively on them in his investigations. Metalogic is then connected with the attitude to consider certain concepts more valuable and important than others, different from other apparently innocuous and irrelevant every-day concepts like *table* and *chairs*. To say it with Kuusela (2008), I will call this rejection of *levels* among concepts and within language a dismissal of *logical hierarchies*.

It is not immediately clear why certain concepts should be more important so that they stand out among all the others. Most likely, it is so in virtue of their supposed *clarificatory power*. A clue to this conclusion is given in Ambrose's notes, where we read that it was Frege the one considering some words as *unique*, such as *word* or *proposition*, an attitude that Wittgenstein himself attributes to his past self (AWL, p. 13). In both cases²¹, we find a model of philosophy that relies heavily on particular concepts that are supposed to play a *foundational* role in logic once they are correctly understood and their definition spelled out. This is self-evident in the *Tractatus*, as there we find a set of *claims* asserting some metalogical *definitions* of concepts like *proposition*, *picture*, *thought*, *language* and so forth. These definitions are supposed to play as conceptual kingpins in a unified and systematic account of the logic of language, on the basis of which *any* clarification can be pursued. The relevance of such concepts is thus justified by their *foundational* potential, they are *fundamental* in the specific sense of being those concepts that constitute the grounds we need to lay down in advance in order to understand language.

21 It is not entirely clear whether Wittgenstein is doing justice to Frege's thought. Nevertheless, we can see a certain predominance of some concepts in Fregean logic, such as *Bedeutung*, *Sinn* and *Gedanke*, and it is true that they play a sort of foundational role in Frege's logic, insofar as they are used to describe *every* possible well-formed sentence.

Now, this fundamentality is abandoned by the later Wittgenstein. It is true that some concepts are more present while doing logic – concepts methodologically relevant like *game*, *proposition* and so forth – but just because we are mainly dealing with language and problems arising from its misunderstanding, Wittgenstein says, and not because they play any *special role* (LWL, p. 31). It is just, so to speak, a matter of quantity – we happen to use such concepts more often - not of quality.

However, it can be objected that a certain hierarchy is inevitable as long as we have to *start* from some grounds to clarify language, as long as we use some concepts, such as *games*, *calculus* or *rules*, as *models* to describe specific language uses, and so forth. Wittgenstein's remarks can be said to be hierarchical in this obvious sense. A solution might be to say, as in the case of metalogical generality, that Wittgenstein is rejecting not hierarchies *tout court*, but a certain *conception* of them, that is, the one assuming that we need to find out the essence of pivotal concepts by spelling out definitions and *on the basis of which* developing our description of logic. In the *Big Typescript* we find a quick discussion of the term *fundamental* that seems to suggest such a conclusion. There, Wittgenstein claims that the very word *fundamental* needs to be understood not metalogically (BT 88 p. 305). We should not reject then the word *fundamental* as intrinsically problematic, but only understand it non-metalogically as well, that is, without reducing its use to a univocal conception that distorts our quest for clarification. In other words, what counts as *fundamental*, as it is not a metalogical concept either, cannot be fixed in advance, and thus varies according to different language uses and needs. As hierarchies are tied up to what is fundamental, they inevitably vary according to what counts as such, case by case.

Once this is clear, metalogic then is not *only* a particular way to conceive the generality of concepts through the notion

of *essence*, or the tendency to go astray dogmatically in logical investigations. It is also (and crucially) a conception of language that assumes a fixed and univocal *hierarchical order* among concepts. The hierarchies we should avoid are the ones that are *fixed* and assumed *in advance*, before our investigation of language begins. It is important to notice that hierarchies and conceptual unity based on essences are two sides of the same coin: as long as there is no common feature shared by *all* possible languages, there is no point in fixing some universal principles that are supposed to be valid for every language and from which overlooking every possible case of language use. As such, this is what it means that there is also no *metaphilosophy*:

If a man [...] sets out (tabulates) rules according to which certain words are used, he hasn't committed himself to giving an explanation (definition) of the word 'rule', 'proposition', 'word', etc. I am allowed to use the word 'rule' without first tabulating the rules for the use of the word. And those rules are not super-rules. Philosophy is concerned with calculi in the same sense as it is concerned with thoughts, sentences and languages. But if it was really concerned with the concept of calculus, and thus with the concept of the calculus of all calculi, there would be such a thing as metaphilosophy. (But there is not. We might so present all that we have to say that this would appear as a leading principle).

(MS 114, p. 104/PG, p. 115-16/BT p. 54)

Here, metaphilosophy is introduced and defined as that part of philosophy addressing the general nature of those concepts philosophy employs in its activity of clarification, such as *rules* or *calculi*. Naturally, there is no metaphilosophy as long as there is no metalogic, that is, as long as we dismiss the drive to look for essences and formulate exceptionless definitions for *every* concept, included the ones we employ in philosophical clarification. As such, we do not need to discover or construct a general definition of such terms in order to be allowed to employ

them in our understanding of language. We use them, as long as they are effective in clarification, and that's it. This obviously does not mean that there is no metaphilosophy in the sense that we cannot develop a *reflexive* investigation on philosophy and its concepts if we need to clarify them. We can clarify them if there is a need to do it, but the result so achieved by clarification does not need to be put as a *foundation* of our method, it is not *preliminary* to the investigation. The rules for the use of such *rules* are not in this sense, as Wittgenstein says, 'super-rules', hierarchically laid in advance and orienting by principle our investigation. The dismissal of such a foundationalist attitude is ultimately called by Wittgenstein, with a certain irony, his *leading principle*. The only principle left is that there are no principles on the basis of which solving *every* possible problem in philosophy.

To conclude, the rejection of metalogic is automatically a rejection of metaphilosophy, and a philosophy freed from metaphilosophy is an activity that, as a consequence, describes language without the need to lay down in advance general definitions always valid for every case under investigation. The conceptual tools philosophy employs can be subjected to investigation in the very same way as any other ordinary concept. As long as there are no fixed hierarchies, we are not forced to clarify *first* the concepts we use in clarification, insofar as they are useful to bring about an understanding of the works of language and dissolve philosophical problems.

1.4 Metalogic and the *Tractatus*

The rejection of metalogic seems to be linked with Wittgenstein's rejection of his early work, so playing a notable part in that process of revision that pushed him towards his new philosophical method in the *Investigations*. As such, the *Tractatus* is a perfect example to highlight all the features of a purely metalogical thought we are invited to abandon.

When it comes to logical essences, the *Tractatus*'s main goal was to find the *essence of proposition*, shared by *all* possible propositions to be such. We find it explicitly stated in the notebooks: 'The whole task', Wittgenstein writes, 'consists in explaining the nature of the proposition' (NB, p. 39). In the *Tractatus*, the quest for the essence is achieved by formulating the *general form* of the proposition. Accordingly, it is supposed to be formulated *on one occasion beforehand* (TLP 5.47), as it is indeed its *essence* (TLP 5.471), so that a universal framework for logic can be set up. Not coincidentally, Wittgenstein repeatedly addresses the concept of *proposition* in his lectures. There, *proposition* too is defined as a 'family of cases' concept, explainable through examples rather than definitions (AWL, pp. 67-68), and it said to be wrong to start from a definition and to 'build up logic from that' (AWL, p. 13), as the *Tractatus* did. Logical generality itself is understood in the *Tractatus* only modally, through the notion of what is *essential* in the proposition (TLP 3.341-3.342).

As the form of the proposition is by itself formulable on one occasion beforehand, we can see how much this task is also meta-philosophical in the sense clarified above. In the *Tractatus*, the very activity of clarification of philosophical problems is dependent on the propositional form. Once it is discovered, together with the picture theory, we can then proceed to reduce every meaningful proposition to it. In other words, there is no philosophical activity without the preliminary set up of metalogical definitions and theses the *Tractatus* elaborates. In this regard, the *Tractatus* works as a fully *foundational* work that clarifies once and for all those concepts that shape our investigation of language. Finally, dogmatism comes as a natural consequence. The *Tractatus* theses, once formulated, demand to be valid and true for *every* case under scrutiny. In this way, a mere term of comparison, as in the case of pictures, is sublimed into a metalogical thesis on the essence of the proposition.

2. Meaning and Metalogic

In this second part of the paper, I shall now consider which consequences the rejection of metalogic might have for the concept of linguistic meaning. Moore and Ambrose's notes, in Moore and Ambrose notes, meaning is said not to be a 'central question' for philosophy, and for this reason, not a metalogical concept (AWL, p. 31, MWL, pp. 316-318). As such, several expectations come from this: first, there is no need to lay down in advance a definition of what meaning ultimately is, on the basis of which solving every philosophical problem; second, there are no *theses* about the essence of meaning in the *Investigations*; third, as soon as the concept is not reducible to a *single* definition, we might expect there are different *conceptions* of meaning active in Wittgenstein's writings.

PI 43, the notorious paragraph on meaning, almost quoted as the slogan of Wittgenstein's later thought, fits perfectly well these desiderata:

For a *large* class of cases of the employment of the word 'meaning' – though not for *all* – this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use in language. (PI 43)

The remark introduces a definition, the meaning of a word is its use in language. However, as in the case of defining propositions as pictures, we should not assume that it captures the essence of the concept in question, quite the contrary: the extension of the definition is carefully *limited*, meaning that there might be cases of the use of the word *meaning* that are not entirely reducible to use alone.

The profound non-metalogical character of PI 43 is somehow lost in those mainstream interpretations that conceive Wittgenstein as a kind of normativist when it comes to meaning. A notorious example is Baker and Hacker's commentary, according to which Wittgenstein's appeal to use should be interpreted as an appeal to *rule governed use* (see Baker Hacker 2005a). Rules become

pivotal in their interpretation, insofar as they bound sense to the presence of a formulable set of rules governing our words in advance and metaphysical and conceive nonsense as *violations* of such rules. We can thus already spot the deeply *metalogical* flavour of this interpretative strategy: the concept of *rule* becomes the conceptual kingpin from which overlooking language, there is no meaning without rule and PI 43, interpreted normatively, becomes a meta-philosophical principle that we need clearly to formulate in advance if we want to understand effectively why some combinations of words do not make sense.

In the fourth volume of the commentary, while discussing the status of Wittgenstein's notion of *nonsense*, Hacker makes evident how much is interpretation is still *metalogical*. Correctly, he points out that 'there is no general account of nonsense, for what makes sense and what does not make sense varies from case to case' (Hacker 1996, p. 240), and he calls the opposite attitude to give a universal account of meaningfulness and senselessness *metalogical*. Nevertheless, his account is still *metalogical* in a deeper sense. In fact, he concludes his argument by saying that 'there can be no fruitful, illuminating, general description of breaking rules in game' and that 'we can traverse the bounds of sense in indefinitely many ways, as each language game involves different rules' (Hacker 1996, p. 240). This means that Hacker, despite his convictions that we cannot draw in advance a general description of what counts as sense and nonsense, is still fully committed to understand the notion of sense *in the light of* the concept of *rule*. According to him, we cannot know in advance *how* the violation of rules might be shaped for every possible language, but we can certainly know in advance that, *whenever* there is nonsense, *there* a violation of linguistic rules *must* be into place. Needless to say, this requirement is *metalogical* as much as it is meta-philosophical, as the notion of *rule* is still considered as a *hierarchical* principle governing our expectations on how

meaning, language, sense and nonsense must *ultimately* be, and this attitude is exactly what Wittgenstein is striving to reject in the later phase of his thought.

This being said, what is left to do is to give some substance to a non-metalogical account of meaning. At first, we can already say that the concept of rule, yet very helpful to clarify a lot of different language uses, does not tell the whole story when it comes to meaning and language. Other conceptions of meaning are then available, but which else? There may be some languages that are fully rule governed – as in the case of maths and logic – and language games that are not bound only and exclusively to rules, as when we write or read a *poem*. In those cases, material aspects of language, such as the tone and sound of the words, the expressions and gestures accompanying them, are important as much as the rules and conventions governing its normal use. A rather obvious example – frequently employed, not coincidentally, in poetry – where *sound* can be said to constitute the meaning of the word is the one of *onomatopoeias*, that is, words imitating a specific sound, as in the case of animal noises (*oink*, *woof*). As Kuusela 2008 notices, in the *Nachlass*, Wittgenstein claims that in onomatopoeias ‘the sound is also a symbol’ (MS 109), meaning that the material component of the symbol, the mere *sign* is an active component of the word understood as a symbol, that is, a word with a meaning that can be understood. This differentiates onomatopoeias from the other words, insofar as in their case the sign is *not* arbitrary, is not replaceable by another synonym without compromising the nature of the symbol as an onomatopoeias. It is true that onomatopoeias can be institutionalized and learnt through rules and conventions – we can explain what *to splash* mean after all – however, they can be understood on the basis of their *sound* alone, meaning that rules do not necessarily intervene here to make understanding possible.

As we thus cannot capture fully the logic of onomatopoeias

normatively, we can well admit that sound, together with rules, make up our concept of meaning understood not metalogically. This should not be taken though as a thesis according to which in *every* possible language game sound plays *always* a symbolic role, so that we should swap rules with sound and other material aspects of language (letters in the case of writing). If we do so, we would still be fully entangled in a metalogical perspective. Rather, we should merely recognize that we call *language* a variety of different but similar things involving signs and their use that cannot be captured exhaustively by normativity *alone*. Sometimes, other logical components, like sound, indeed, might be required. It can be demonstrated that such a pluralistic perspective is fully displayed in the *Investigations* too, but this is the material for another paper.

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II.

SEMANTICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The Composition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: An Interpretative Study

Nikolay Milkov
University of Paderborn, Germany
nikolay.milkov@upb.de

Abstract: *When Wittgenstein started writing the Tractatus in June 1915, he believed that he was producing a theory. Accordingly, he chose a theoretical style of expressing his thought. Wittgenstein abandoned this style only toward the end of his finishing the work. He realized that what he was producing was not a theory but a manual for improving our thinking and language. Unfortunately, it was too late to change the architecture and style of the book: Wittgenstein simply had no time to do that. This drawback makes the Tractatus notoriously difficult to understand and is apparently the major factor that led to the so-called "Tractarian Wars."*

Keywords: *Frege, Russell, Tractatus, Wittgenstein*

1. The New Archaeological Studies of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

Wittgenstein Tractarian studies have experienced a real turn in the last few years, a turn produced thorough chronological reconstruction of the composition of the *Prototractatus* and the publication of the University of Iowa *Tractatus* Map.²² *The Prototractatus tools* (PTT) are especially helpful since they give us much detailed and important information on the genesis of the *Tractatus* and its corrections made by Wittgenstein as displayed

Both were published on the Internet: <http://wittgensteinsource.org>,
<http://tractatus.lib.uiowa.edu/tlp/>.

in MS 104 (also called Bodleianus). It appears that Wittgenstein started writing down his “treatise” not later than in the last days of June 1915.²³ He finished it late in 1918 in 12 phases (to be discussed in § 5) of work that also included:

- The *Ur-Tractatus* (the first 12 pages)
- The *Core-Tractatus* (the first 28 pages)
- The *Proto-Prototractatus* (the first 70 pages)
- The *Prototractatus* proper (the first 103 pages). (Pilch, 2018, p.106)

The present paper is interpretative. It seeks to make sense of the new archeological work on the composition of the *Tractatus*. Among other things, our analysis shows the resolute reading of the book to be mistaken. It is important to remember that this influential interpretation was advanced more than 30 years ago by Cora Diamond and James Connant as an alternative reading of Wittgenstein’s work (Crary and Read 2002). According to it, the *Tractatus* consists of two parts—a body and a frame. To the frame pertain §§ 3.32–3.326, 4–4.003, 4.111–12, and 6.53–4. All other paragraphs are part of the body. Wittgenstein considered the frame seriously, whereas all the remaining propositions of the book, which belong to its body, are written “tongue in cheek.” The main idea of the frame is expressed in § 6.54 which read:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.).

23 See Bazzocchi (2015, p. 339). According to Pilcher (2018, p. 132), Wittgenstein started writing the *Tractatus* two months later, at the end of August 1915. In the present paper, we will follow Bazzocchi’s dating.

This was the real message of the *Tractatus*.

The new archeological work of the *Tractatus* shows that Wittgenstein's book was really composed of different building blocks, produced in different periods of time. In a sense, it was really a patchwork. However, these parts were not the ones announced by the resolute readers. In other words, the new empirical material failed to support the interpretative hypothesis of the New Wittgensteinians. And, as in science, a hypothesis that is not supported by the empirically collected materials is just to be abandoned. Famous in this connection are the phlogiston theory of combustion, and the ether theory of propagation of electromagnetic or gravitational forces that were experimentally disproved.

2. The Evolvement of Wittgenstein's Early Thought

In his "Notes on Logic," "Notes Dictated to G E Moore," and the first pages of *Notebooks 1914–1916*, Wittgenstein wrote down what he believed to be his logical-philosophical *discoveries* (Milkov 2012).²⁴ Here are the three most well-known examples of such discoveries:

- In the "Notes on Logic" (p. 94), Wittgenstein set out that propositions correspond to facts (we will return to this discovery in § 3)—not to complexes—of the world which are their meaning.

- In "Notes Dictated to G E Moore" (p. 108), he formulated the Doctrine of Showing.

24 In 1931 Wittgenstein remembered: "When I was in Norway during the year 1913–14, I had some thoughts of my own." (1980b, p. 20) And a year earlier, in 1930, he had noted: "When before 16 years, I had the thought that the law of causality is meaningless and that there is a view of the world that eschews with it, I had the feeling of starting a new epoch." (MS 183: 6.5.1930) In contrast, in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein maintained that what he made were not discoveries but grammatical-philosophical remarks. Importantly enough, this claim went together with the contention that he was concerned with grammar, not with logic.

- In the *Notebooks* (p. 7), Wittgenstein advanced the idea that when we think and operate with language, we make “logical pictures” of *states of affairs*.

Apparently, between 1913 and June 1915, Wittgenstein was convinced that there was something like a logical world—in a way similar to what Frege would call later (in 1918/19) “the third world”—and that his task was to make discoveries in it. In this sense, “logical investigations explore the nature of all things” (1953, § 89). Moreover, at that point in time, Wittgenstein believed that his philosophical discoveries were autonomous, which meant that they could be discovered in isolation, one by one.

Importantly enough:

- The ideas that Wittgenstein discovered in the course of these years were of different significance: some of them were fundamental, other not. Still other were practically useless.

- Wittgenstein often forgot his previous discoveries, recalling them only after periods of time with dissimilar length, expressing them now in a new, different form. We are going to see how this side of his method of working affected the composition of the *Tractatus* in §§ 3 and 7.

- Wittgenstein believed that his discoveries fitted together perfectly well—in a sort of a pre-established harmony—even if one must develop them a little bit further to make them fit together perfectly well. (In such cases, Wittgenstein formulated new propositions whose task was to help fit the old discoveries, or building blocks, together; cf. § 6.) Unfortunately, as we will see in the following, Wittgenstein’s old and new discoveries did not always fit together.

These traits of Wittgenstein’s work shaped the process of composing the *Tractatus*.

3. Wittgenstein's Key Discovery

The main claim in this paper is that the discovery which made Wittgenstein confident that he was ready to start writing his treatise was guided by the remark made in the *Notebooks* on May 9, 1915: "The proposition is the picture of the fact." (p. 46) In contrast, when he introduced the term *picture* on September 29, 1914, and also in the next few months, he claimed that the proposition was the picture of a *state of affairs*, not of *facts* (pp. 7f., 25, 34). But why was this, *prima facie*, minor difference so important to Wittgenstein?

Wittgenstein had used the term *fact* even before that. Actually, this was the great innovation in "Notes on Logic" and in "Notes Dictated to G E Moore" (see § 2). From August 1913 till May 1914, however, Wittgenstein maintained that propositions *corresponded* to facts, not that they *pictured* facts. But the first months after Wittgenstein introduced the notion of picture and picturing on September 29, 1914, he always used it together with the notion of the state of affairs. Intriguingly, the term "state of affairs" was introduced nine days earlier, on September 20, 1914. So it is legitimate to ask if the introduction of the concept of picturing was its implication.

But let us return to the question: Why was the discovery that "the proposition is the picture of the facts" so important to him? We maintain that the answer to this question is to be sought in the critique Frege addressed to him—and to Russell—in December 1912. (Milkov 2013) Frege attacked (Russell's and) Wittgenstein's decision to identify complexes with facts, pointing out that "a complex is not like a fact. For example, it could be said that a complex, unlike a fact, moved from one place to another."²⁵ Frege also stated that, if an object were a part of a fact, the fact would be larger than the object. In effect, Frege held that, whereas "a complex is a spatial object, composed of spatial objects," a

25 Wittgenstein (1974, p. 199; 1964, p. 301).

fact is not.²⁶ Facts are something like organic unities, a kind of living entities.²⁷ Especially, the idea that when we understand propositions we grasp spatial complexes struck Frege as mistaken. He argued, instead, that in such cases, we understand *one* thing, namely the thought that we grasp, which can be either true or false. It sharply differs from the spatial complex that is segmented. Later, in “Thoughts”—perhaps stimulated through his discussion with Wittgenstein in December 1912—Frege defined “fact” as “a thought that is true” (1918/19, p. 368).

Wittgenstein took the first step in digesting and adopting Frege’s criticism in his critical remarks to Russell’s book project *Theory of Knowledge* (June 1913), and then in “Notes on Logic” (September 1913). His argument was (we have already mentioned it in § 2) that “the meaning of a proposition is that fact which actually corresponds to it” (pp. 94, 112). This claim tied up with another one: the fact is the proposition’s “truth-maker” (p. 95).

As we already have seen, however, when Wittgenstein introduced (aka discovered) the “picture-theory” on September 29, 1914, he connected it with state of affairs, not with facts. In other words, for more than seven months, perhaps out of enthusiasm over his new discovery, the picture theory, he forgot the lesson he had received from Frege. Indeed, states of affairs are much more “complex” than facts. In particular, they indicate that there are wholes (situations), the parts of which—“things”—reciprocally relate to one another (Mulligan 1985; Milkov 2020a, pp. 98, 106). Apparently, Wittgenstein needed more time to orient himself in his own discoveries.

But why were pictures thus different from conventional

26 Ibidem.

27 It becomes clear, at this point, that the clash between Frege’s position and that of Russell–Wittgenstein in December 1912 was a form of a confrontation between the German and the British philosophical traditions. (Milkov 2015, 2020)

propositions? The answer to this question can be found in a remark made by Wittgenstein approximately at the same time, on April 4, 1914 (1979, p. 26). He now realized, perhaps echoing Frege's suggestion about the nature of facts, that pictures are living entities: a picture "presents a state of affairs ... like a *tableau vivant*" (*lebendes Bild*; "like a living picture," in Ogden's translation of *Tractatus* 4.0311). Conventional propositions, in contrast, are not living entities. Wittgenstein's key discovery of May 9, 1915 was made in this context. Now he found out that "the proposition is the picture of the fact" (p. 46).

It deserves notice that this was not an easy birth. Only three weeks before that, on April 15, Wittgenstein had complained: "I cannot bring out how far the proposition is the picture of the situation [state of affairs]. I am almost inclined to give up all my efforts." (p. 41) The discovery that propositions picture *facts* resolved the problem.

The most important implication of this discovery was that Wittgenstein now found out that there was something identical between the picture and the fact:²⁸ the pictorial (or logical) form. The decisive point at stake here is *identity*, not a correspondence. This automatically implied that, as Wittgenstein put it, "I can devise different pictures of the fact. ... But what is characteristic of the fact will be *the same* in all these pictures." (pp. 46f.—italics added) The only necessary condition for this is that all these pictures have as their meaning the *same* particular fact they were modelling.

But the discovery of May 9, 1915 had further implications for Wittgenstein's logical philosophy. Above all, the (partial) identity between pictures and facts implied that the language and the world are, in the sense of this identity, the same. Wittgenstein,

28 In a sense, with this understanding, Wittgenstein rehabilitated the identity theory of truth Russell abandoned after he published "On Denoting" (1905). See on this n. 15 and Milkov (2020b).

however, did not stop here. Shortly afterward he postulated no less than six different partial identical ontological–logical levels: (i) the *world*, (ii) the *fact*, (iii) the logical *picture*, (iv) the *thought*, (v) the *proposition*, and (vi) the *general propositional form*.

The just-mentioned partial identity is based on the fact that the transition from one level to another (the world, the fact, the picture, the thought, the proposition, and its general form) is accomplished simply by arranging the elements of the preceding level in a new way (*Art und Weise*) (Milkov 2019). This means that, in a sense, the higher levels of Wittgenstein’s logic–ontology were a kind of doppelgänger of the basic levels—they are not autonomous entities. By way of a genealogical remark, the phrase “Art und Weise” was to be found at the very beginning (on p. 3) of the *Ur-Tractatus* in this form: “The proposition is the propositional sign plus the determinate relation (*Art und Weise*) of picturing” (3.2). This is an indication that Wittgenstein had this conception on his workbench from the very beginning.

In short, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein maintained that “in a state of affairs [in the atomic fact], objects stand in a determinate relation [*Art und Weise*] to one another” (2.031). In other words, states of affairs are nothing but “the determinate way in which objects are connected in [it]” (2.032). This connection gives us a topologically congruent tight “fitting” (*passen*) of the objects (of their boundaries) of the states of affairs of one and another, in a specific arrangement (in a specific way). According to this conception, the elements (the objects) in the state of affairs are not connected with the help of a *third element*, a mortar;²⁹ they stick together through the topology of their boundaries alone. In other words, states of affairs are nothing but collections of invariant items (objects) ordered in a specific way (Milkov 2019, pp. 9 f.). They have *no constitutive* role. The other five transitions

29 “The elements [of a state of affairs] are not connected with one another by anything.” (1984, p. 252)

to a “higher” level of this openly branched ontology are made by the same token. Among other things, this position gave birth to Wittgenstein’s “eliminativism” in the *Tractatus* (see Milkov 2002a, p. 51), which follows the method of leaving all “third elements” aside.

We find that the discovery of May 9, 1915 was the finishing piece in Wittgenstein’s early logical philosophy. He now believed that with it, the main parts (building blocks) of his work were already there—they only had to be synoptically ordered. Historically, this claim is supported by the fact that Wittgenstein started composing the *Tractatus* immediately after he made this discovery of May 9, 1915—at the end of that month (Bazzocchi 2015).

4. The *Prototractatus* Grows up From Six Cardinal Propositions

Wittgenstein developed his project book in a peculiar fashion: he started with a series of six (partly) identical levels. To be more explicit, he formulated six cardinal propositions in which the world, the fact, the (logical) picture, the thought, the proposition, and its general propositional form were successively defined:

- (1) The *world* is all that is the case.
- (2) What is the case, the *fact*, is the existence of states of affairs.
- (3) A logical *picture* of facts is a thought.
- (4) A *thought* is a proposition with a sense.
- (5) A proposition is a *truth-function* of elementary propositions.
- (6) The *general form* of a truth-function is

The six cardinal propositions of the *Tractatus* are self-sufficient but at the same time articulate six levels of *dependency* on each other—for example, thinking is ontologically dependent

on the world, and language is logically dependent on thinking.³⁰

Next, out of his cardinal propositions Wittgenstein advanced a hierarchical “logical tree” out of which his project book developed further (Stern 2016, p. 205). More explicitly, the genealogical picture of composing the *Tractatus* showed up that it grew up in an organic, quasi-vegetal way, out of a bundle of six trunks. It comprised logical tree-branches that grew out of the bundle of six “trunks” of the book. The implication of Wittgenstein’s adopting this approach was that the *Tractatus* was written as something like a collection of footnotes to the six cardinal propositions quoted above. In other words, the book “consists of remarks on remarks on remarks” (Mayer 1993, p. 114).

But we can put this point also in another, perhaps more balanced perspective. According to it, the text of the book project was arranged to start up and evolve in six different levels that are in a relation of dependence: in different chains of thought following the six cardinal propositions. In this context, we can say that by composing the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein followed the “hexaptych principle,” “hexaptych” meaning here a polyptych with six parts. This metaphor, however, has its own problems. The point is that each of these levels but the first one is superstructured over another so that the sixth level is superstructured, in this sense, five times. Apparently, this is not a conventional hexaptych.

In the wake of new archaeological research into the composition of the *Tractatus*, interpreters like Peter Hacker and Luciano Bazzocchi, as well as the Iowa *Tractatus* Map, suggest a new way of reading the book. They claim, and we join them here, that “the book should be read as a hypertext, a tree-structure defined by the author’s numbering system. ... [It should be read] not sequentially, from the beginning to end” (Stern 2016, p. 204). This suggestion was supported by the (only) footnote Wittgenstein

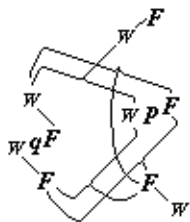
30 “*Language* is [only] the method to express our thoughts in perceptible way.” (Wittgenstein 1980a, p. 235)

added to the book:

The digital numbers assigned to the individual propositions indicate the logical importance of the propositions and the stress laid on them in my exposition. The propositions $n.1$, $n.2$, $n.3$, etc. are comments on propositions no. n ; the propositions $n.m1$, $n.m2$, etc. are comments on propositions no. $n.m$; and so on.

There was also a new edition of the *Tractatus* that presented it in this way (Wittgenstein 2017).

Importantly enough, besides that Wittgenstein had quite solid theoretical grounds to follow this highly unusual method of presenting his ideas, it was also supported by the Doctrine of Showing, which he had on his workbench not later than in the end of 1913.³¹ It found expression, for example, in para. 6.1203 of the *Tractatus*, which claimed that the proposition “ $\sim(p.\sim q)$ ” could also be written in the following manner:



The idea was that a suitable graphical form of the logical notation also shows the logical properties of the world and of the language. In the “Notes Dictated to G E Moore in Norway,” the Doctrine of Showing was formulated thus: “in ‘ aRb ’, ‘ R ’ is *not* a symbol, but *that* ‘ R ’ is between one name and another symbolizes” (1979, p. 109).

In short, Wittgenstein did not introduce the idiosyncratic method of exposing his ideas in the *Tractatus* simply for the sake of aesthetic perfectionism. Rather, his objective was to produce

31 Wittgenstein communicated the Doctrine of Showing in a letter to Russell, in November 1913 (1979, p. 127ff.).

a surveyable presentation of his logic. In fact, “‘surveyable’ (*übersichtlich*, literally, overview-able) is a key term of art for Wittgenstein, and carries the sense of making it possible to take in a complex structure at a glance, in the way that one can grasp the lay of the land by looking at a landscape from a well-placed hill or tower” (Stern 2016, p. 215). Moreover, this position was already started by Frege (Milkov 1999).

5. Putting the Pieces (the Logical–Philosophical Discoveries) Together in Good Order

Let us now turn to the chronology of writing the *Tractatus* and to discuss in more detail its composing.

In § 1, we have already noted that Wittgenstein composed the *Tractatus* in 12 phases. Phases I and II, in which Wittgenstein composed the *Core-Tractatus*, were creative. During this period Wittgenstein developed ideas that were to elucidate his cardinal propositions. After 28.03.1916, phase III started, which saw Wittgenstein simply integrate “the good propositions” of the “Notes on Logic” into his growing manuscript. In phase IV he also integrated the “good” propositions of his *Notebooks* I and II.³² At the end of 1916, Wittgenstein wrote down some new propositions that were based on “Notes Dictated to G E Moore in Norway.” On the New Year Eve of 1916, the *Proto-Prototractatus* was finished. Wittgenstein’s book project now comprised 71 pages. In 1917 (phases VI and VII of the composition of the book³³), he integrated the “good propositions” of “Notebooks” III. At the end of the year, the *Prototractatus* was finished. In 1918, Wittgenstein made some corrections to it, leading to the final version of the

32 *Notebooks* I was kept from 22.08.1914 till 01.11.1914, *Notebooks* II from 01.11.1914 till 20.06.1915, and *Notebooks* III, from 15.04.1916 till 10.01.1917.

33 These were composed in Vienna in early 1917. In Phase VI there are still no remarks on ethics (Pilch 2018, p. 109).

Tractatus.

This chronology of composing the *Tractatus*, revealed by the recent archaeological studies of the book, confirms the suggestion that the early Wittgenstein used his old discoveries as finished building blocks out of which he concocted the book. In other words, what Wittgenstein incorporated in the upcoming *Tractatus* were not simply scattered fragments from his *Notebooks* but well-formed *spolia* that were integrated in his new masonry (Pilch 2018, p. 139, n. 82).

Even if we leave the hypertext-order of the *Tractatus* out of consideration, the adoption of a synoptic method of working, connecting his logical–philosophical discoveries into a *system* after May 1915, produced a radical change in the style of his writing. This found expression in a letter to Russell from December 22, 1915, in which Wittgenstein wrote: “The method has changed drastically.” (1995, p. 102) Wittgenstein himself was conscious that his new style of expression made his text “very hard to understand without further explanation”³⁴ (Ibid.).

Most importantly, the *Tractatus* disrupted the natural evolvement of Wittgenstein’s thought—the meditation form of writing that was characteristic of the *Notebooks* (and also of the *Philosophical Investigations*)³⁵ and increased the impression, also to himself, that he was a theoretical philosopher, producing a *system*. Among other things, this change of style was strengthened and supported by the adoption of the numbering system of Russell’s and Whitehead’s *Principia mathematica* in the book.

34 Later, Wittgenstein himself noted that every sentence of the *Tractatus* must really be *read* as the title of a whole *chapter* (Rhees 1984, p. 159).

35 As Wittgenstein wrote in a letter to Russell, “the problems are becoming more and more lapidary and general.” (1995, p. 102)

6. The Emergence of Wittgenstein's Anti-theoretical Stance

Unfortunately, the natural development of Wittgenstein's thought in these months worked in a direct opposition to this endeavor to promote a synoptic conception and also against any theoretical orientation. As we already have noted, when he started composing the *Tractatus* in June 1915, Wittgenstein believed that he was advancing a new *theory*. To be more explicit, as late as June 6, 1915, he spoke about a "picture-theory" (1979, p. 55). Apparently, at that point in time, Wittgenstein was convinced that he was a theoretical philosopher. Shortly afterward, however, Wittgenstein realized that the propositions of this "treatise" do not advance a theory at all. This was confirmed by the fact that after June 1915 he carefully avoided speaking about theory.

In parallel, Wittgenstein also stopped speaking about "truth-making." Ostensibly, this was because the standard theory of truth-making requires: (i) autonomous truth-makers: facts and states of affairs (in contrast, there are no autonomous truth-makers in the identity theory of truth³⁶); (ii) autonomous truth-bearers, or propositions (Simons 1992). After adopting the partial identity between states of affairs and propositions in May 1915, however, these conditions cannot be met. Facts, states of affairs, and propositions were not autonomous anymore.

7. When did Wittgenstein Realize that the Propositions of the *Tractatus* are Nonsensical?

The new archaeological explorations in the composition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* showed that the development of Wittgenstein's thought was not as straightforward as one is usually

36 Russell defended the identity theory of truth between 1900 and 1905. After composing "On Denoting," however, he advanced the correspondence theory of truth, based on his famous multiple relation theory of judgment. Between September 1913 and May 1915 Wittgenstein developed his limited identity theory of truth as a reaction to Russell's new theory of judgment, which Wittgenstein criticised, starting June 1913.

inclined to believe. In fact, Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* were an "experimental field for reflections in all directions" (Pilch 2018, p.122). A typical example is Wittgenstein note of 12.04.1915, which we already quoted in § 3: "I cannot bring out how far the proposition is the *picture* of the state of affairs. I am almost inclined to give up all my efforts." (p. 41) After his discovery from 9.5.1915, that "the proposition is the picture of the fact" (p. 46), not of states of affairs, he stopped speaking about states of affairs altogether (and, incidentally, also about truth-functions³⁷), only to reintroduce them after he restarted writing the *Prototractatus*.

The evolvement of the *Prototractatus* clearly shows this palpable tension between a theoretical stance and anti-theoretical intuition in the early Wittgenstein. For example, in the process of composing the *Prototractatus*, the concept of *model* was gradually replaced by that of *picture*, so that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein spoke about models only three times, virtually opposing this term to picture, a term used dozens of times.³⁸ Moreover, while working on the book, in several cases he replaced the word "model" with "picture."³⁹ Similar is the fate of the notion of "concatenation" (*Verkettung*) of objects (a term mentioned only in 4.122), which was gradually replaced by "connections" (*Verbindung*) of objects (it is mentioned 10 times in the *Tractatus*).

Revealing the meandering development of Wittgenstein's thought between 1914 and 1918 is instructive indeed. In particular, it helps to better understand his most controversial proposition, 6.54, that actually led to the "Tractarian wars."⁴⁰ To be more

37 We are not going to discuss this topic in the present paper.

38 Among other things, this point shows that the interpretation of the Tractarian pictures as models (Mersch 2011, p. 23) is mistaken.

For example, on p. 3 of the "diplomatic presentation" of the *Prototractatus*: http://www.wittgensteinsource.org/PTT/PTT_A_1.pdf

40 Important as it was, the zigzagging progress of Wittgenstein's thought with the composition of the *Tractatus* was not the main reason for the difficulties to understand it. The main difficulty, as we see it, is discussed in Milkov (2017).

precise, Wittgenstein's claim that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical evolved at least in three steps:

(i) First, at the end of the *Core-Prototractatus* (on p. 18), Wittgenstein started to maintain (while he was in Sokal, Galicia, late in 1915) that his very loose "theories" are nonsensical in the sense that they are not necessary. According to him now, "philosophy [only] aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity" (4.112).

(ii) Months later, on p. 49 of the *Proto-Prototractatus*, while in Olomouc in the second half of 1916, Wittgenstein noted that "a philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations" (4.112). A little later, on p. 59, he "discovered" that we could also elucidate the primitive signs.⁴¹

(iii) Only in the second half of 1917, however (on p. 86), Wittgenstein wrote that the propositions of his book "serve as elucidations" (6.54). This discovery was followed by the insight that "anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical"⁴² (Ibid.).

It is clear that when Wittgenstein started working on the *Tractatus* at the end of June 1915, he did not realize that his propositions are nonsensical. Apparently, Wittgenstein developed this position only after he became convinced that both his logical notation and his ontology had *no constitutive role*.⁴³ They could only help by elucidating our thinking and language. At the end

41 Primitive signs were indefinable and, as Aristotle had already put it (*Met.*, 1039b27), the indefinables are ineffable.

42 According to the "New Wittgensteinians," these two propositions pertained to the "core propositions" of the *Tractatus* that were not meant "tongue in cheek." In truth, they were written down at quite different times.

43 Regarding this see the penultimate paragraph of § 3 where we examined this in respect of the Tractarian ontology. We have shown there that the Tractarian logic has no constitutive role in (Milkov 2013, p. 203).

of the day, however, they are to be (or, more precisely, *can be*) eliminated, or thrown away.

Significantly, Wittgenstein developed the idea of 6.54 while working on “the solution of the problems of life” (6.521).⁴⁴ Besides, Wittgenstein realized that the propositions of his book were nonsensical after he reread the already composed *Proto-Prototractatus* over and over again. This work made the real message of his work clearer to him. It helped him to develop a synoptic picture of the book.

Unfortunately, Wittgenstein discovered this too late to change the architecture and the style of the book; he simply did not have the time to do that. To be sure, Wittgenstein wanted to publish his ideas, and he also knew very well that he would not survive the War. He considered finishing his work at the earliest as his main task.⁴⁵ It was a race against time. In contrast, in the early 1930s, when Wittgenstein decided to put his “later philosophy” in print, he had enough time to experiment with the style of articulating his thoughts. The experiments started with the *Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Grammar*, and the *Big Typescript*, went through the *Blue* and the *Brown Books*, only to find an appropriate solution in the first version of the *Philosophical Investigations* (1936).

8. Our Interpretation

In order to better understand this most intricate proposition of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, we will follow the interpretation we developed elsewhere (Milkov 2017). According to it, the objective of the *Tractatus* was similar to that of Frege in his *Conceptual*

44 This work was supported by the reading of Leo Tolstoy’s interpretation of the *New Testament*. On how the discussion of these problems can lead to Wittgenstein’s “quietism” see Milkov (2003).

45 “You must get my manuscript printed whether anyone understands it or not,” wrote Wittgenstein to Russell on May 22, 1915 (1995, p.102).

Notation, namely to set out a new, “perfect” symbolism.⁴⁶ Among other things, it can help to discriminate between sense and nonsense, and so can make our thinking clearer. Once we learn, with the help of this symbolism, by way of mastering it, how our thinking works correctly, we do not need the symbolism anymore. At last resort, this means that the logical and conceptual distinctions that Wittgenstein made in the *Tractatus* were only needed in order to make our language and thinking better. When this objective is achieved, we can discard them.

Importantly enough, the distinctions made in the *Tractatus* are not false. They simply are not necessary in order to think correctly. That is why they *can* be abandoned—but only when the logical symbolism is perfect and when the reader who understood it has also *mastered* it. As a result, the task to elaborate and to make good use of the perfect language is most important and can have particularly fruitful results.

Among other things, this interpretation is supported by Wittgenstein’s remark in 6.54, which we already referred to in § 1, in particular, by his claim that the person who understood the propositions of the book recognized them as nonsensical *only* “when he has used them—as steps—to *climb up* beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has *climbed up* it.)” (Italics added). Wittgenstein’s insistence on *climbing up* clearly points at a process of reaching a *higher position*, in our interpretation, in the process of mastering the perfect symbolism of the *Tractatus*.

9. Epilogue

The account given above shows that many ideas of the *Tractatus* could be easily presented as discoveries—in fact, they were pronounced as discoveries. In the process of composing the

46 Another point that we are not going to discuss in this paper is that the Tractarian perfect symbolism has no constitutive import (see §§ 3, 7).

book, however, Wittgenstein gradually realized that they had no constitutive but only supportive role—the role of scaffolding. This point convincingly explained the concluding remark of the *Tractatus*: “Anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them [the propositions of the *Tractatus*] as nonsensical” (6.54).

These two tendencies of the *Tractatus* made it notoriously difficult to understand. On the one hand, there were many theoretical winks in the work, but on the other hand, at the very end, it declares that they were “nonsensical.” These two contradictory tendencies in the book created the illusion of a seemingly theoretical study in philosophy that was essentially and effectively “nonsensical.” This ambiguity was also the main reason for the infamous “Tractarian Wars” between the “New” and “Old” Wittgensteinians.

The anti-theoretical tendency in Wittgenstein’s outlook reached a new stage after 1929, when he clearly realized that the new ideas he pronounced in the *Tractatus* were not discoveries but conceptual remarks. Apparently, the progress of Wittgenstein’s eliminativism by composing the *Tractatus* was only a beginning of a development that ended in the radical eliminativism of his *Philosophical Investigations*.⁴⁷ The proposition 6.54 simply marked an important step in this direction.

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The semantic ontology in Wittgenstein's philosophy

Denitsa Zhelyazkova

Phd Student in Contemporary philosophy

Sofia University

15, Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd.

Sofia, Bulgaria

e-mail: d_zhelyazkova@hotmail.com

Abstract: *The aim of this article is to sketch the place the theory of meaning has in the overall conception of young Wittgenstein, and to derive from that some of it's general and central characteristics. The idea of extracting a theory of meaning from the Treatise does take a central stand in this work, since it presupposes an interpretation of the book as a whole.*

Key words: *semantic ontology, Wittgenstein, logic, meaning, logical form.*

The nature of the main work of Wittgenstein's (Logical-Philosophical Treatise) remains controversial, as it does seem, at least at first sight, it contains a substantial theory of meaning. The treatise outlines the nature of meaning and it analyses the way in which meaning relates to linguistic words. The aim of this article is to sketch the place the theory of meaning has in the overall conception of young Wittgenstein, and to derive from that some of its general and central characteristics. It is not my intention here to enter into the debate surrounding the 'state of affairs' or the idea of ineffable insight of Treatise that has been proposed by the so-called New Wittgensteinians . There are a many ways of

reading the book other than the resolute one, that make this possible. Fortunately, for our short purposes it will not be necessary to discuss the various options and decide between them. A central intention of Wittgenstein's during his entire life was ethics and esthetics. The two modes – ethical and aesthetical – through which reality could be 'reached' are in fact 'one'. This is so since they are both aspects of the mystical: in the first case we contemplate over the world as a whole, while in the second – we contemplate over the objects in the world from the perspective of eternity. The time of his work on the *Treatise* was no exception. Reports by contemporaries, from philosophy and from other walks of life, the surviving notebooks (1913) that he kept in that period, as well as some of the things he said about 1921 after it was completed, leave no doubt that at that time, as always, ethics and esthetics was of fundamental importance to Wittgenstein. The point of the book is an ethical one. What Wittgenstein wants to do is to safeguard ethics from all kinds of theorising, from logical analysis and metaphysical speculation. Ethics is about what to do. Ethics does not belong in the cognitive realm of thought and reasoning, proof and disproof, ethical views can not be discussed, argued, they can not even be expressed in meaningful language. To show this, rather than merely state it, Wittgenstein needs a theory of meaning and thought from which it follows that ethics falls outside its line. In the preface of *Treatise* Wittgenstein describes the aim of as 'to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts.' The totality of expressions of thoughts is the totality of everything that can meaningfully be expressed. The idea is that once the limits of that are drawn, we can characterise ethics. So the theory of meaning and language offers is there for a specific purpose. This observation is not just relevant for an understanding of the Tractarian project as a whole, it also informs some of the more conspicuous features of the theory itself. Universalism here refers to the task that Wittgenstein sets itself,

to give an account of how language operates in general, not the way any specific language works, but what underlies the possibility of any language to express meaning. Referentialism refers to the ontology and semantics. The central role is played by the picture theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of a sentence is the situation it pictures. This picturing relation has two basic ingredients. The first is the existence of a depicting relation between simple expressions, names, and simple entities, objects. The second is identity of the logical forms of the picturing sentence and the pictured situation. The idea of logical form as the most fundamental structure of both the world and language is central to Wittgenstein's thinking here: every contingent feature of what makes an actual language meaningful, every contingent characteristic of some situation that is captured in language has to be abstracted away from, if we are to uncover the most fundamental principles that make meaning possible in the first place. At its most general level it is the logical form that world and language share that allows the two to enter into the picturing relation. The world is made up of facts that are available. The totality of all facts determines what is available and not available in the world. The facts exist on their own and represent the existence of states of things. The case determines the state of affairs. The states of affairs are the joining of things, and things are constituents of the state of affairs. However, things have the ability to enter into states of affairs. The commonality between states of affairs and possible states of affairs is the object. Although they have entered into a certain state of affairs, the objects have the possibility of entering other states of affairs. The philosopher shows that the states of affairs are not separate entities. They are conditioned by the ability of the thing to be present in the state of affairs. However, things are entities. On the one hand, the thing has a form of independence, this form of independence consists in its ability to encounter different states of things. On the other hand, this same

form of autonomy is limited because it is related to the states of things. By entering into certain states, it becomes a „form of insolvency“ (Wittgenstein 1960: 52; 2.0122). The function of names is to represent the simplest objects in the world, and the way names are linked in a sentence shows how the objects in question relate to each other. From this situation it becomes clear that the way in which the names of simple objects in the world are linked in a sentence cannot be named. Knowledge of an object is only a knowledge of its intrinsic properties that determine the totality of its ability to be present in the state of affairs. Wittgenstein then concludes that „if all objects are given, then all possible states of affairs are given“ (Wittgenstein 1960: 52; 2.0124). The philosopher situates all things in a „space of possible states of affairs.“ This is the logical space of the treatise, on which the possibility of some knowledge of things depends. For example: „the field of vision should not be red, but it should have some color: it has, so to speak, should have color space around it. The tone must have some height, the subject of touch, some firmness, etc.” (ibid.: 53; 2.0131). Once connected in configuration, objects exercise one of the possibilities inherent in them, but their form remains a condition for the possibility of the structure of the state of affairs (see Wittgenstein 1960: 53; 2.033). In order for things to participate in elementary states, they must already be embedded in them, that is, every opportunity must lie in the nature of the object (ibid.: 52; 2.0121; 2.0123). Shortly afterwards, Wittgenstein added that „the possibility of his being in the state of affairs is the form of the object“ (ibid.: 53; 2.0141) and the form is „the possibility of the structure“ (ibid.: 53; 2.033). The totality of all facts is the world, and the figurative theory of language answers the question of what we can know about it. The picture theory is the basis of the relation language-world, propositions-states of affairs. In it, the same basic principles are postulated regarding the image. The image form is an opportunity for the structure of

the image, which is the way of connecting its elements (ibid.: 55; 2.15). The elements of the image must correspond fully to the elements of the state of affairs. Names of things necessarily refer to some parts of reality - objects. In the world, we have objects with their form, where logic is a condition for the possibility of states of affairs happening. On the other hand is the state of affairs in a language whose form of expression cannot be expressed but merely displayed. The common thing that every image, of whatever form, must have with reality in order to be able to - correctly or incorrectly - depict it is a logical form, ie. the form of reality (ibid.: 73; 4.12). Because propositions cannot represent the commonality they have to with reality - the logical form - the form remains only able to be shown. The contingent true character of a proposition is only possible by the fact that it has the same logical form with what it portrays - with reality. As the case determines the state of affairs, the proposition acquire true or false value by chance. The proposition is true if there is a state of affairs it describes. If the state of affairs that describes the proposition does not exist, then the proposition is false. Likewise, the depicting relation that puts names and objects in a one-to-one relationship is devoid of any descriptive content, simple because such content would be contingent and hence would make the meaningfulness itself a contingent matter as well. More important properties of objects and names in the Tractarian system is that they display variation in 'form', another term used in a technical sense, viz., to indicate the possible configurations in which they may enter. Both names and objects may differ among themselves in the combinations with other names and objects they may engage in, because the world is everything that is the case. The realm of the meaningful coincides with the totality of the contingent, then ethics is excluded, since whatever ethical value is, it is necessary. With ethics a number of other domains of the necessary, such as logic, mathematics and science, fall outside the realm of the

meaningful as well. These Wittgenstein deals with successively in the last part of the *Treatise*, explaining in each case why what looks necessary and meaningful in fact is not. Logic, being the transcendental scaffolding of world and language that makes the meaningful possible, is 'ineffable' in that it can not be meaningfully described, but is shown by meaningful description of contingent situations. Mathematics does the same. Ethics is also dubbed 'transcendental'. and is also ineffable, but it is shown, not through language, but through action. Such a necessary and a priori distinction between the meaningful and the meaningless requires a theory of meaning that is itself necessary and a priori. This means that it has to hold not just for some particular language. Nor is it sufficient to characterise the meaningful for all natural languages. The goal it aims to achieve, requires that it be completely general, that it hold for any conceivable form of language, any possible form of symbolic expression. When young Wittgenstein mentions 'language' it means all logically possible forms of symbolic expression; when it refers to 'world' it indicates any logically possible configuration of situations; and when it mentions 'meaning' it abstracts away from any contingent features that make particular expressions mean particular things. Wittgenstein's theory of meaning is thus transcendental in the broad sense of dealing with 'conditions of possibility'. Constructing meaning in terms of the picturing relation, it comprises an ontology, a theory of linguistic structure. These three elements consist of a reconstruction of the fundamental properties of the world, of language and of their interconnection, that are needed for any concrete language to mean any concrete situation. Recall that this 'critical' task itself derives from another one, that of securing the ineffability of ethics. Thus, it appears that the ontological and linguistic theories that Wittgenstein offers are derived from this fundamental starting point, and hence, give us an account, not of the world or of language directly, but of

what they have to be like for meaningful expression to be possible in such a way that ethics remains outside its reach.

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The Last Language-game

Dimitar Elchinov

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
d.elchinov@pm.me

Abstract: *I propose to conceive of a peculiar type of Wittgensteinian, who embraces language-games talk and takes ambiguity to be a methodological norm, governing meaning-related problems. Then I attempt to draw the implausible implications of such methodological position and present an alternative dubbed “the last language-game”. At the end of the paper I construct three objections against playing the last language-game and attempt to respond to these objections.*

Keywords: *meaning as use, language-games, ambiguity, the last-language game, ideal language*

I. A Thought-experimental Wittgensteinian

First, let us do an exercise in metaphysics: consider a Wittgensteinian with a specific theoretical disposition (disclaimer: I am not saying that such Wittgensteinians actually exist, nor I deny it; I am merely offering to partake in a thought experiment). Let’s name our Wittgensteinian “Flavia”. Flavia has read *Philosophical Investigations* on multiple occasions and was impressed by

“[...] The meaning of a word is its use in language.” (*PI* 43)

Then, in a number of *PI* fragments, Flavia discovered that uses vary across language-games (*PI* 65, for instance). She concluded that, since a word only has a language-game-specific use, a word only has a meaning **for a** language-game and not across language-

games. Thus meanings turned out to be language-game specific as well, or to use a more popular expression – meanings turned out to be *domain-specific*. Her conclusion was confirmed by Wittgenstein's own confession that words across language games do not have identical meanings but can only be characterized via "family resemblances" (PI 67).

Flavia then came to understand that an expression is not merely an expression but multiple expressions at the same time, each of them initializing due to a speaker's actions in a particular language-game (much like a linguistic correlate to quantum superposition). Being an ancient mythology enthusiast, and a philosopher of science, she then came to apply the Wittgensteinian methodological approach to language in these domains. Thus,

"Trojan horse" means a mythical wooden horse in the language-game of historians;

"Trojan horse" means a specific type of malware in the language-game of cybersecurity experts;

"Trojan horse" means a covert right-wing conservative in the language-game of an antifa group.

So, when asked "What is a Trojan Horse?" Flavia would reply: "There is not one Trojan horse, but many!". Analogously, it turns out that there would be, of course, many "sciences":

"Science" means a tool for establishing asymmetry in political power in the language-game of postmodernists;

"Science" means the best academic and epistemic practices in the language-game of scientists;

"Science" means a set of charlatan practices in the language game of Soviet academics.

(etc.)

These insights allowed Flavia to get out of difficult theoretical situations by stating that she was playing a different language-game all along. So, for instance, when she stated that science was a tool for establishing asymmetry in political power and she was

confronted by scientists stating that science constitutes the best academic and epistemic practices, she merely pointed out that they used the word “science” in a different language-game, yet implicitly generalizing this language-game as a universal one.

Flavia also gained the amazing meta-insights that:

a) “Trojan horse” means a family of language-games in the language-game of certain Wittgensteinians;

b) “Science” means a family of language-games in the language-game of certain Wittgensteinians.

She ultimately generalized to:

“x” means a family of language-games in the language-game of certain Wittgensteinians.

This generalization enabled Flavia to make an academic career out of sharing her insight that all words had the same type of meaning: they all mean a family of language-games in the language game of certain Wittgensteinians. It turned out that taking meaning as use and language-games to be facts about language is an original and highly successful move.

II. The problems of language-games talk

Next, let’s call Flavia’s approach “language-games talk”. I will argue that Flavia’s methodological approach to language, namely language-games talk, is flawed because (1) it conforms to ambiguity. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that according to Flavia ambiguity is a methodological norm when analysing language. Additionally, her approach is flawed because (2) it allows a speaker to always “have something different in mind”, changing the subject matter of a discussion at will.

Let us elaborate and consider further implications of the problems stated in (1) and (2) to motivate ourselves to seek an alternative.

If *Philosophical Investigations* was considered to be an exposition of a theory, it would be a theory built upon ambiguity

as a robust, inescapable fact about language. This fact has to be taken into account when building a theory of language so the theory would inevitably conform to ambiguity. Thus, identical graphic and phonetic entities (“words”) would have different meanings according to contexts (“language-games”), and, vice versa, different graphic and phonetic entities would have identical meanings according to contexts. Additionally, since everyday language is to be considered as the maximal language (and not simply an exception to what a language is), this theory would have to be a general language theory, overthrowing “exception” theories (or theories identifying language with a primitive language), such as the one exposed in the *Tractatus* (compare PI 23).

However, stating that language in general is necessarily ambiguous and behaving as if it were so, i.e., ascribing meanings according to contexts to account for the ambiguity premise, is simply not a proper way to treat language and language-related problems. It could be argued that language-games talk is descriptively adequate as in a large number of cases everyday language *is* ambiguous. This attempt to mitigate the situation is rendered worthless by the very taking of ambiguity as a fact. For since it is *a fact*, albeit descriptively justified, ambiguity has to be treated much like a norm: it is necessary to take it into account when theorising upon language and when considering the analysis of linguistic components. This point is succinctly expressed by stating that at least in some cases factive descriptions behave methodologically just as norms would.

But why would one, and especially a philosopher, take ambiguity as normative? Taking language to be necessarily ambiguous would further lead to:

1A) ...violating the law of non-contradiction (and the law of identity) in a number of cases (and consequently diminishing the quantity of information transmitted via a verbal action).

1B)rejection of the possibility of definitions (and,

consequently, rendering philosophical analysis worthless and philosophical problems unsolvable).

1C) ...the need to constantly refer to the uninformative and arbitrary notion of a language-game or context in order to explain how a word was used. The constant appeal to different contexts as “backgrounds” which alter the meaning of a word/expression is a proper case of *context ex machina*, to use my Serbian colleague Milan Yovanovich’s ingenious new expression.

1D) ...philosophical works in disciplines different from the philosophy of language being reduced to discussing purely linguistic problems of use (philosopher A uses “qualia” in language-game X, but philosopher B simply uses it in language-game Z and that’s the final word on the matter).

Surely, we could do better.

Then, to address (2) from above, language-games talk would further allow a speaker (and, by extension, a theoretician) to change what they have said in a both *ad hoc* and *post hoc* manner. Consider Flavia’s favourite sentences from section I above. For instance, talking about Trojan horse would allow her to talk about right-wing conservatives and/or malware in a variety of situations. Any objections to such contamination can easily be met by Flavia simply saying: “But I was not playing *this* language-game! I was playing the *other* language-game!”. This problem of language-games talk would further lead to...

2A) ...speakers changing their meanings at will by stating that a word/expression was used not in *this way* but in *that way*, leading to manipulative verbal action and unproductive discussions. Again, this is a case of *context ex machina*.

2B) ...linguistic outsiders would have hard time learning a language in which meanings change according to potentially an unlimited set of use variations.

2C) ...speakers using unequivocal language or attempting to construct such a language could have their efforts neglected/

obstructed by Wittgensteinians of the Flavian type.

Again, we could surely do better. We could even do better without completely discarding the term “language-games” and without accepting a radically different theory of meaning.

III. A non-radical alternative: the last language-game

The use theory of meaning has been “upgraded” since Wittgenstein’s late opus classicus, and has adopted a truly robust outlook (i.e., Horwich 2004). There are other alternatives, such as modern versions of referentialism, etc. However, the alternative I am about to suggest is at least partly within the limits of Wittgenstein’s use theory (even though calling it a “theory” goes a bit too far). I’d like to propose a language-game which would solve all the problems related to language-games talk. I call this alternative “the last language-game”.

Suppose one is able to introduce language games (in collaboration with others, of course). Arguably, such cases have been recorded: M. Heidegger introduced the language-game of utter incomprehensibility, G. Lucas introduced the language-game of Star Wars fans, etc. I’d like to do something similar.

The language-game I am proposing is quite simple. Let us return for a moment to our thought experiment involving Flavia the Wittgensteinian. When Flavia needs to demonstrate her use of the expression “Trojan horse”, instead of stating sentences in which the expression is used in different and incompatible ways, she could adopt the following alternative:

“w1” means a mythical wooden horse in the language-game of historians.

“w2” means a specific type of malware in the language-game of cybersecurity experts.

“w3” means a covert right-wing conservative in the language-game of an antifa group.

Thus each time Flavia is confronted with ambiguity, she

could resolve it by replacing the identically vocalized/written expression with a unique expression (e.g., “w1, w2, [...] wn”). The effect would be complete disambiguation.

Should she take this alternative, however, there would be no longer any need to further speak of language-games. To elaborate, a word/expression would simply mean what it means in a single language-game (or a single context, praise be to the heavens). As far as language-games are concerned, the outcome would be tantamount to a “game over”. Then, when confronted with the need to demonstrate the meaning of a word/expression, a speaker could resort to a definition in the form “x is y \equiv x is z”, or any other technically valid alternative, completely ignoring the need to consider other cases of use (for such cases would no longer be available anyway). Instead of specifying that “w1” would mean “a mythical wooden horse” in case type 1 and “a right-wing conservative” in case type 2, one would simply say what “w1” means in the only type of case in which “w1” is used. This would in turn render worries considering the possibility of definitions obsolete as definitions would most certainly be possible, keep laws of classic logic intact, prevent Flavians from changing their “intended” meaning at will, allow linguistic outsiders to learn a much easier language, and keep philosophy engaged with problems which are not simply problems of how a word is used.

IV. Objection 1: “Flavia is not a true Wittgensteinian!”

One could argue that reading the *Investigations* as Flavia does is simply erroneous. A true scholar of Wittgenstein would never succumb to her mistakes.

Response: Granted. But mistakes can be made and methodological problems can be created even by false Wittgensteinians (no matter who the “true” Wittgensteinians are). I wholeheartedly admit that my attempt at critique keeps the true Wittgensteinians intact.

V. Objection 2: “Wait, is this not the ideal language project? Didn’t it fail?”

G. Frege and R. Carnap (compare Kluge 1980: 140, and Carnap 1932: 67), among others, had suggestions regarding language similar to the last language-game. These suggestions remained as specialized theories and blossomed beyond philosophy. They were found unsuitable for practising philosophy for a variety of reasons, and the ideal language project was abandoned in favour to an explicit return to the standard, ordinary language-derived way of doing philosophy (due to considerations elaborated in Malcolm 1942, for instance). Piecemeal formalized solutions of centuries-old problems, such as B. Russell’s brilliant resolution of the “how to properly deny existence” problem, never found application in everyday language and were treated accordingly in philosophy (see Chakrabarti 1997 for a fitting example of a Flavian-like solution to the “denying existence” problem). Everyday language philosophy flourished instead, contributing to today’s abundance philosophical works. In the domain of philosophy, at least, the ideal language project seems to indeed have failed (at least based on the fact that it was never fully adopted). It is worthy to clarify though: generally speaking, the ideal language project did not fail. Arguably, it contributed (albeit phylogenetically) to the construction of more than 200 programming languages which are nowadays used to communicate with another type of intelligent beings – computers, illustrating the efficiency of non-ambiguous languages.

On the other hand, should Flavian Wittgensteinism (if it exists) be taken as an alternative to the ideal language, we face all of the problems from section II above. A last line of defence against such objections would be for the Flavians to bite the bullet and admit – “Sad but true! This is the nature of everyday language.” However, there is no reason to take uncritically this alternative as correctly describing everyday practices. Wittgenstein’s description of how

language works in the *Investigations* is as empirically compelling as Wittgenstein's description of how language works in the *Tractatus*. One simply has no other tool than their own arbitrary intuitions to evaluate which of the two descriptions better fits actual linguistic practice. Indeed, even without proper empirical research we are surely entitled to stating that contextual meaning and ambiguity are facts about everyday language, but technically this would be but a hypothesis. Thus, it would seem that Flavian Wittgensteinians simply prefer lower methodological standards when theorizing on language.

Additionally, the proposal to play the last language game does not amount to an appeal for adopting a full-blooded ideal language, nor to a denial of contemporary philosophical method (never mind how exactly would the latter be construed). It is simply a way to demonstrate that taking language-game talk as the descriptive alpha and omega regarding language leads to completely avoidable, arbitrary, and unacceptable (due to efficiency considerations) implicit norms. These norms force methodologically unchallenged ambiguity and theoretical pessimism on everyday language and ultimately lead, in the case with Flavian Wittgensteinians, to a distorted view on how to conduct any kind of research which involves language.

VI. Objection 3: “Take a look at important philosophical works. They would be rendered impossible if we played the last language game!”

This objection could go in a variety of ways, for instance: the initial discussion based on the Gettier problem would be rendered void if we tried to play the last language-game. It would seem that at least part of the difficulty with the analysis of knowledge stems from ambiguity: in some language-games “knowledge” cannot be played in the place of “justified true belief” but, on the other hand, in other language-games, let's call them non-Gettier language-

games, “knowledge” and “justified true belief” can be played interchangeably. If we played the last language-game though and allowed for knowledge to be “w1” and “justified true belief” to be “w2” it would become clear that in no cases “w1” is to be taken as a synonym of “w2”, destroying the initial philosophical drama with Gettier’s counter-examples. In other words, a non-ambiguous language would not allow for a faulty definition of “knowledge” in the first place. However, this would decrease the overall amount of philosophical work and deprive the world of important intellectual insights. What good can come out of that?

To respond: philosophy as a serious, scientific endeavor, would benefit from cropping problems related to contextual use of relevant terms. Most epistemologists, for instance, are hardly interested in such problems anyway, and do not gain anything from a methodological perspective by struggling to disentangle the peculiarities of ordinary language. It is clear from many of the responses to the Gettier problem, such as the ones offered by R. Nozick and A. Goldman, that epistemologists do attempt to play the last language-game, i.e., they treat “knowledge” as an non-contextual term which has to (and can be) be given correct definition notwithstanding language-games and forms of life. Philosophical method, with some woesome exceptions represented by various forms of contextualism, conforms, more or less efficiently, to playing the last language-game. The latter statement is really a triviality; philosophers do not have the option not to attempt playing the last language-game as Flavian Wittgensteinism would bring about a number of methodological absurdities if used systematically for the aims of philosophical research.

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Reasonable Doubt: Does It Need Its Own Justification?

Anna M. Ivanova

St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo
anna.ivanova@ts.uni-vt.bg

Abstract: *In “On Certainty” Wittgenstein regards doubting as meaningful and reasonable only in a context providing language game where some background is taken for granted. Doubt, just as knowledge, should be backed up by an argument, only this time, one presenting reasons for uncertainty. Common sense propositions constitute part of the background for the arguments of doubting and because of their function and place within the system of language, they are regarded as indubitable. I discuss critically the idea of linguistically determined indubitability and advocate the possibility of a different kind of doubt, one that does not require its own justification and is still a reasonable epistemic attitude. Such doubt characterizes the states of affairs where the certainty of a proposition is not yet rationally established. I argue that, language does not limit us in doubting and in doubting reasonably.*

Key word: *Wittgenstein, doubt, certainty, propositions of common sense, indubitability*

In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein is concerned with Moore’s arguments against the sceptic that come from two types of (allegedly) indubitable propositions. The first type concerns the existence of bodies, external objects and the ways in which they are present in space and time. (see Moore, 1925, p. 107) The

second type asserts the presence of a different kind of entities - a person's immediate experiences (for example, of their body parts), beliefs (memories, expectations), dreams and feelings⁴⁸. (Moore, 1925, p. 108). Propositions of both types present the "Common sense view of the world" (Moore, 1925, p. 118) and are according to Moore to be known with certainty (1925, p. 106). Wittgenstein seems to agree with him on treating them as cases that confer certainty but he disagrees with him on the question of their knowledge status⁴⁹. Among the various lines of his criticism, there are two considerations of special importance for the topic of doubt. The first one is that certainty is subjective and knowledge claims make sense only when something objective is reported. (cf. e.g. 1969, §15, §16) and the second is a counter - explanation of the indubitable character of common sense propositions that stems from Wittgenstein's conception about the nature of language.

Both arguments treat the question of indubitability and rely heavily on the idea that doubt is logically possible only in a context providing language game where some background is taken for granted. (1969, §341, §342) Wittgenstein's account of indubitability suggests that in order to be reasonable, doubt, just as knowledge, should be backed up by an argument only this time, one presenting reasons for uncertainty. Where such reasons cannot be submitted, doubting does not seem to make any sense (cf. Wittgenstein, 1969, §154, §157).

This last thesis will be questioned in the following passages by a reconsideration of Wittgenstein's explanation on the indubitable character of common sense propositions and by arguments

48 The first group will be referred to in the text as "common sense propositions", as beliefs in them are widely shared and they form an essential part of a reasonable person's worldview and the second – "propositions of mental states" or "mental state reports".

49 On the points of agreement and disagreements between Moore and Wittgenstein regarding the epistemic and linguistic characteristics of the propositions, see White, 1986, pp. 314-18

concerning the general epistemic conditions of doubting. I will advocate the possibility of reasonable doubt that does not require justification or any other propositional background as its rational condition. The text of *On Certainty* leaves some room for its establishment as far as the roots of indubitability and believing are sometimes presented as “groundless” (see 1969, §166) However, the kind of doubt whose possibility is advocated here is not treated as radically different from regular cases of epistemic hesitation. The arguments for its permissibility are intended as an objection to the idea that judgements of the common sense worldview are in fact indubitable by virtue of some existential or linguistic pre-setting.

The purpose of the analysis is instrumental - it addresses some further epistemological issues. There are sceptical implications behind the idea of linguistically determined indubitability. If knowledge establishes itself in some sort of semantic givenness, then this poses limitations on knowing and on justification. The consequences of the intertwining nature of the semantic and the epistemic and of rule and evidence, insert the risk of arbitrariness within the standards of rational thinking.

FROM SUBJECTIVE CERTAINTY TO OBJECTIVE INDUBITABILITY

On the one hand, in order to know one needs complete rational certainty⁵⁰, on the other hand – it seems, rationally, one cannot be completely certain of anything unless one knows. Inspections of instances of knowledge suggest that knowing (for its most part) is accompanied by rational certainty; however, certainty, even when it is rationally sustained, is not always a case of knowledge.

50 The terms “certainty” will be used here in the sense of a doxastic state, determined by the appropriate level of justification, rather than as an objective property of propositions. (cf. Klein, 1993, p. 62) Such a meaning refers to the characteristics of the epistemic agent and her mental states. Passages of *On Certainty*, (e.g. 1969, §30), suggest that such a doxastic account is closer to Wittgenstein’s usage of the term.

Propositions of the common sense worldview are subjectively certain but whether they constitute a case of knowledge depends on their further epistemic features.

In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein adopts a critical notion of knowledge in the Cartesian sense according to which one only knows as far as one has justification for their belief. (1969, §175, §432) He develops further this understanding by adding to it an indispensable pragmatic dimension and places the force of his arguments against Moore upon it. Knowledge, for Wittgenstein, is not some special mental state different from belief (even such of complete certainty) (1969, §230), it is a term used in communicative contexts with regard to the objective conditions of the acceptance of beliefs. (e.g. 1969, §15-18,) Furthermore, propositions can be knowledge only if they are supported by something more credible than they are, with which the risk of mistake is overcome. There is a clear line between knowledge and evidence in this respect, drawn by their linguistic and epistemic functions (cf. Wittgenstein 1969, §504) Knowledge is the result from the resolution of doubt. Evidence, on the other hand, is typically not doubted, for it is the tool for deciding for or against a proposition in the process of this resolution. (1969, §196-198)

Given this picture of knowledge and evidence, reports about private mental states proposed by Moore as a type of things that are known with certainty do not qualify as knowledge. Their certainty is not denied, but it is not considered indicative of knowledge, because this is just not the way in which the expressions are commonly used⁵¹. Anything that could count as evidence for these propositions shares the same foundational epistemic status. (cf Wittgenstein, 1969, §111) Common sense propositions also cannot be considered knowledge because of their certainty, but they might be considered known for another reason - they may

51 The sense of "knowing" in Wittgenstein is restricted to "normal linguistic exchange" (1969, §260).

be a subject of justification. However, these do not seem to be propositions learned through evidence under some occasion. For Wittgenstein they are accepted partly because they somehow come along with our life form and its collective practices and partly because we have been in “unshakable conviction” due to the persuasions of our upbringing. And since they are imbedded in all our life practices, they more likely lay the ground for knowledge⁵² rather than being knowledge.

Despite these objections against the idea that propositions of the common sense worldview are instances of knowledge it cannot be said that Wittgenstein regards their acceptance as irrational or that his argument does not at all concern the epistemic aspects of knowledge ascriptions. His counter explanation of their certainty is based on their special place in the living practices of language-games. He ascribes to them methodological role in thinking and cognition. Their alleged linguistic function has epistemic consequences - the entire system of language and knowledge sustains them.⁵³ For Wittgenstein their certainty is not based on epistemic conditions but on existential necessity: the fact that they are intrinsically related to human acting (1969, §204). This way, the subjective certainty of the propositions of the common sense worldview is explained by their objective indubitability rooted in the principles of language use and other human practices.

THE THEORETICAL SUPPORT OF THE INDUBITABILITY THESIS

One of the consequences of this view is that in common language it is impossible to make a rational argument for the

52 “209. The existence of the earth is rather part of the whole picture which forms the starting-point of belief for me.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, §209)

53 Compare: “248. I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house.” (1969, § 248)

uncertainty of both types of propositions. They are objectively indubitable since any background for establishing such an argument has to pre-suppose them⁵⁴. This way, the human cognitive practice of doubting would appear to be a species of some language-game with serious epistemological consequences. If the subjective certainty and the methodological function of these propositions as the ultimate justifiers for beliefs is based upon their linguistic and practical function then the practice of knowing is pre-determined by language as a life form. As far as knowing and doubting require some linguistic method; a proposition of methodological function can only be questioned if another method is available. The main reason for the adherence to the propositions of the common sense worldview, given their foundational methodological importance, seems to be the exhaustion of the sources for doubting. There are two points that may be questioned here: first, the thesis that there are empirical propositions of foundational methodological importance, and second - the thesis that no methods affords rational doubting without some linguistic givenness of the sort.

Just as the conceptual shift from subjective certainty to knowledge is problematic, the one from common acceptance and triviality to normatively sustained indubitability deserves more scrutiny. Language framing may explain but is not sufficient to prove the unreasonable nature of the doubt in common sense propositions. The arguments presented in *On Certainty* in this respect (e.g. 1969, §310-§315) are designed to be demonstrative but there are reasons to think they may be insufficient since methods of empirical validation also apply to this issue and the very notion of linguistic indubitability may become elusive if it is not grounded in data about actual epistemic agents. It is very hard to distinguish between a proposition that is just typically assumed as a part of numerous arguments, and one that has foundational

54 For Wittgenstein "The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes after belief." (Wittgenstein, 1969, §160).

methodological importance with general considerations about the structure of human language, reasoning and acting. Many views in human history regarded as truisms and thus, as what people trivially consider common sense, have been overcome without significant changes in human communicative and other practices. It may be argued that if in the Middle Ages, someone doubted the existence of God, or that women were less smart than men, their doubt could very well have been unintelligible to peers of the time. It would also probably have had some very disadvantageous practical effects. Such propositions had enjoyed the status of pillars for the human experience, reasoning or worldview but contemporary instances of their rejection suggest that they had been subjected to doubt at some point. The same applies to concepts. We may have used them without deliberation due to the mastering of the rules of their usage but as Lehrer points out (1990, p. 177-178) many of them have become obsolete as our knowledge of the world increased.

Furthermore, removing a proposition with the rank of a rule of reasoning from a system of beliefs would be expected to have some drastic consequences on that system. The extent of such revisions is hard to determine as it is unforeseeable just how much a particular person's worldview would change if some common sense proposition were suddenly dropped. We do not in fact know how much a system of language and knowledge would change, as the revisions that would follow for the sake of logical consistency can hardly be traced. Perhaps the results of such revisions would change our view on the subject and rearrange entirely what we now, for our current advancement of knowledge and experience consider being basic in a semantic and logical sense.⁵⁵

55 The same is true even if we put human conduct in the picture. If a person decides to act in accord with doubt and dismiss certain beliefs of this sort not just philosophically but in practice, we do not know what the degree of revision to a traditional behavior would be. The case with the proponents of the thesis about the flatness of the Earth provides an interesting field for an investigation on this topic.

The ability to doubt a proposition comes down to being able to assess the chance of mistake and such an assessment is always open for factual assertions on the ground of what Lehrer calls “the fundamental skeptical premise” (Lehrer, 1990, p. 177). Even if a subject is unable to foresee a context where such propositions become void, the ability to consider the risk of mistake in light of the many past mistakes in human thinking undermines the confidence in their veracity. The empirical propositions of the common sense worldview have their linguistic status shifted to the domain of norms as Wittgenstein ascribes to them methodological functions. Seeing language as a form of life⁵⁶, he extends its rules to propositions that have empirical form and their certainty allegedly becomes of logical nature. However, their function alone, does not remove the possibility for doubting them, as their empirical nature is not altered by it. To the contrary, their status of methods for knowledge makes the question of their veracity even more pressing.

It is altogether a peculiar idea of the common sense philosophy that empirical propositions that appear to be exempt from rational doubt, should also be regarded as known without any further deliberation⁵⁷. Wittgenstein rightly compares certainty to the “tone of voice” (1969, §30) that accompanies a statement but that analogy also applies to the sense of indubitability. There is no easy notion of justification that would sustain the idea that a mistake of epistemic nature is not possible for assertions about facts. This questions the whole idea of indubitability for empirical propositions since realizing the insufficiency of the mere sense of indubitability is a rational way to bring about doubt and uncertainty. The rational requirement for the acceptance of any belief is necessary as far as the objective features of a proposition that make it certain or indubitable may after all bear no relation

56 See Wittgenstein, 1958, § 23

57 Moore advocates the possibility of knowing without proof. (Moore, 1939/1993, 170)

to the truthfulness of the proposition. Imagine that upon hearing, we are all biologically inclined to believe with a strong sense of certainty some false proposition and we have no means to uncover its falsity. Instead, despite the lack of further reasons for its acceptance, believing it does not impair our normal practices. The fact that such a scenario is perceivable opens a room for doubt for any proposition. Common sense propositions differ from this instance as far as they are assumed in most of our reasoning and actions, but it is not certain that their consolidated union does. Unless a belief or a set of such is sufficiently sustained by rational means, it cannot present a case of knowledge.

These examples matter not as straight defeaters of the thesis about the linguistically determined indubitability. Radical changes in language and respectively in the content of believed certainties could be explained in the context of Wittgenstein's views of language. They are, nevertheless, important as demonstrations about the principle possibility of doubt and revision. Granted that the propositions of the common sense worldview are part of the fundamentals of thinking and knowledge, the principle possibility for their revision presented by empirical evidence about the evolution of language is enough to question their status of indubitability. But because doubting them in this manner is advanced by the presence of grounds, (i.e. language change and the imperfections of the human cognitive practices) the arguments for such a doubt may easily end up relying on a list of assumptions in a way that despite being able to single out some common sense proposition and question its veracity we might never be able to give up all of them at once and remain reasonable in our effort of doubting.

THE THESIS THAT RATIONAL DOUBT REQUIRES LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS

Wittgenstein seems to think that just as knowledge is a matter of publicly accessible evidence so should doubt be.

Indeed such an account seems reasonable. Belief has the same function as knowledge. If I am to question a belief, it makes sense to address the features it is supposed to possess as knowledge, that is - I should consider the relevant evidence and should show that either it consists of false propositions or it is not conclusive. Perhaps the logical procedure behind the inference does not transfer warrant, or perhaps the conclusion was a product of induction too weak for me to allow for knowledge. This is an epistemic evaluation that measures the chance of mistake according to the publicly bestowed standards of justification. It is usually supplemented by the heuristic building up of mistake scenarios within the particular context. However, in order for this evaluation to be performed in the first place, doubt has to be already present. Disengaged doubt is the initial drive behind our epistemic explorations. Its epistemic conditions do not depend on the presence of some justifying ground, because justification itself as an act of epistemic evaluation is reasonable only in the light of doubting. Wittgenstein presupposes that a person cannot understand the meaning of a proposition without some sort of epistemic commitment. The act of understanding, however, does not seem to logically require acceptance. A person may entertain a proposition without a commitment even to the strict line of its references and meaning. If it is conceivable for me to behave with disregard for a certain belief, if its negation is conceivable, then that is enough to introduce the chance of falsity.

In *On Certainty* doubting a proposition is taken to mean “regarding it as uncertain”. Rationally regarding something as uncertain may be due to the case that the result of its epistemic evaluation assigned “a less than certain” status to the proposition or the reason could be that its veracity hasn’t been established yet (has not been explored or has been but only partially). Doubt in the second case is an epistemically legitimate attitude that precedes any reasoning about the degree of justification. No argument

is necessary to think that a proposition that has not undergone epistemic evaluation should be regarded as uncertain. Rational certainty is not something to begin with, it is its product. That applies not just to everyday judgements but also to propositions that have been granted the status of rules or extensions of definitions or entailed by reference principles or anything else that makes them analogous to logically validated statements. When one does not know, it is rational to inspect the case. The state of not knowing is a good enough reason for doubting.

Under this note, one may still argue that the initial drive behind epistemic evaluations is merely psychological. The uncertainty that fuels and pre-conditions the epistemic assessments is related to the aims of cognitive behavior that rationality serves to fulfill than to the domain of rational deliberations. It may be that such doubt always fails to become a rational stance when the propositions of the common sense worldview are brought to mind. Private mental states and common sense propositions appear certain with immediacy. In most occasions, agents act as if they know them without ever judging on the subject of their veracity. Nevertheless, it is not a given that such a habit stands for their status of indubitability. There are reasons to think that the habit is pragmatically grounded. It would not be reasonable to question the existence of my hands any time I try to grab an object but it is not at all certain that there is an inherent epistemic flaw in such an attitude or that it cannot be performed at all. It is a case not much different from a situation where the evidence on a subject is insufficient but agents, driven by practical demands, act in accord with the most probable assumption. Acting in accord with the most probable assumption, in the context of unchanging line of evidence, develops a pragmatic habit that may increase the subjective certainty but it cannot remove the possibility for doubting. Willing to perform an epistemic evaluation of a proposition is always reasonable from an epistemic point of view

since it is the condition that brings rationality into the picture in the first place. It can at times be very impractical to do so, especially in the case where the evidence overwhelmingly favours one hypothesis over another, but there is no existing standard of verification that forbids it. The result of particular cases of epistemic evaluation is not pre-determined, as we never know what new evidence may be drawn or how our views might shift. Being unable to devise a rational argument is no less worrisome than finding out a degree of uncertainty. It is not epistemically wise to just stumble upon indubitability and be satisfied with it – it is also something that needs to be rationally explored. Rationalizing doubt is a means to resolve it since showing how something is uncertain is pointing to the problematic areas of its justification as a target for improvement (revealing new evidence or making inferences that are more precise). However, failure in rationalizing our skeptic attitudes does not remove them. It presses us to question further whether our language framework is good enough and whether our rational standards are complete.

CONCLUSION

For private mental states as well as common sense propositions it is the case that they are certain whether because people immediately recognize this, or because no rational argument may be presented for their uncertainty. Perhaps, their epistemic evaluation always leads to the conclusion that any argument against them is ultimately self-contradictory. Every time we try to doubt these propositions, they turn out to be unimpeachable but as Wittgenstein has shown not quite with the means of our rational standards of evaluation. However, the framework of language does not limit us in doubting them and reasonably so. If no argument may be presented, there is always the meta-sceptic consideration that perhaps the feeling of certainty is deceitful, that the epistemic evaluation was performed badly, that there is

in fact such an argument, but we fell short of it. This leaves the propositions of the common sense worldview neither certain nor indubitable. As impractical as it may be, we cannot give up on considering them based on failure to bring grounds for our doubt, because doubting is the starting point of the human cognitive inquiry. Knowledge begins with uncertainty and is a practice that is just as basic to human life as are the linguistic practices that we usually employ to refine it. Even though the input of information in our life often comes in linguistic form and depends on it, our cognitive achievements possess some independent sources through which they can affect the ontological commitments in the structure and the concepts of language. This result has positive implications with regard to the prospects of knowledge. Despite the brought back uncertainties, it leaves our strive for learning free of the limitations of linguistic givenness.

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III. AESTHETICS

Wittgenstein on übersichtliche Darstellung and Gaining Clarity

Ognian Kassabov

Sofia University

kassabov@phls.uni-sofia.bg

Abstract: *The article discusses what the later Wittgenstein calls übersichtliche Darstellung together with his view on art. It argues that Wittgenstein does not develop an aesthetic theory and shows how understanding art is akin to conducting a philosophical investigation and expressing a form of life.*

Keywords: *Wittgenstein, aesthetics, art, understanding, perspicuous presentation, clarity, Goethe*

Just what Wittgenstein's aesthetics is has long been a puzzling issue. But this well might be one of those issues that are insufferably easy to answer. For the question behind it might be based on a misunderstanding. If so, then giving an answer would of course consist making the issue disappear by opening that misunderstanding to clear view.

It might be trite to say that being generally skeptical of philosophy as theory, Wittgenstein is of course *ipso facto* skeptical of the very idea of aesthetics as a specific type of philosophical theory. But what can aesthetics, if not a subdivision of philosophy? But what is more, I believe that Wittgenstein's skepticism about aesthetics is so radical that in a sense there is, strictly speaking, *nothing* that can be properly called 'Wittgenstein's aesthetics'. And that this is not necessarily a bad thing. Without making any

essentialist presuppositions about the nature of aesthetics as a theoretical endeavor, there manifestly are different, non-aesthetic, but perfectly meaningful ways of speaking about those phenomena and experiences that we usually call ‘art’, ‘beauty’, ‘judgment’, and the suchlike. And Wittgenstein seems to be arguing that at least some of them are decisively more adequate to what they speak about than what generally passes for aesthetics.

At the same time, paradoxically, Wittgenstein’s thought seems to stand in a broad tradition that places what we are used to call – for want of another word – ‘the aesthetic’ at the heart of thinking itself. This strand of thought obviously includes Kant and post-Kantian German idealism and romanticism, but not only. To put it succinctly yet roughly, for philosophers who belong here, ‘the aesthetic’ is by no means a side affair akin to the fine embellishment provided by a nice yet not quite necessary diversion – to the contrary, it is (in one way or another) crucial for the structure of possible experience, of understanding as such, or, in other versions, for the structure of logic and metaphysics. The early Wittgenstein has his own notorious formulation of the thing in that obscure pronouncement: “aesthetics is transcendental” (*TLP*, 6.421). Here, aesthetics is on par with ethics *and* logic.

In this short essay, I am going to focus on the thought of the so-called later Wittgenstein. In some of the most oft-quoted remarks in what came to be known as *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (*Culture and Value*), he confesses:

I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only *conceptual* and *aesthetic* questions do that. At bottom I am indifferent to the solution of scientific problems; but not the other sort. (*CV*, p. 79)

This oft quoted reflection can throw light on much of Wittgenstein’s writing during and after the 1930s. What is the deep grip of aesthetic questions? And, given the misgivings about the notion, in what sense are they *aesthetic*? To flesh this out,

let us look at a longer passage about how Wittgenstein sees the difference between scientific and conceptual inquiry:

It is all one to me whether or not the typical western scientist understands or appreciates my work, since he will not in any case understand the spirit in which I write. Our civilization is characterized by the word ‘progress’. ... It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure. And even clarity is sought only as a means to this end, not as an end in itself. For me, on the contrary, clarity, perspicuity [*Durchsichtigkeit*] are valuable in themselves.

I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous [*durchsichtig*] view of the foundations of possible buildings. (*CV*, p. 7)

Wittgenstein is not interested in so-called cumulative knowledge with its claims to advancement: scientific, technological, or cultural. What he cares about has a transcendental air to it – gaining a view of the conditions of possibility of insight. And in connection to it, we are introduced to the notion of *Dursichtigkeit* (openness to viewing through), a precursor – albeit of slightly different meaning – to the pivotal notion of *Übersichtlichkeit* (openness to overview) we know from *Philosophical Investigations*, §122.

Manifestly, it is primacy of the search for clarity that brings together ‘conceptual’ and ‘aesthetic’ inquiry; moreover, clarity holds a fundamental status that can be viewed as the legacy of the transcendental status of logic and aesthetics from the *Tractatus*. This clarity thesis might look trivial, but it is not *entirely* so. For even though we talk of clarity in both logical form and artistic presentation, we are accustomed to considering the two as same in name only. But the mysterious (even “mystical”) connection (even “identity”) Wittgenstein from saw early on between logical and aesthetic clarity is not thrown away in his subsequent thinking. Thus, in the *Bemerkungen* he also says that there is a

“queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation and an aesthetic one” (*CV*, p. 25).

So, we should enlarge upon the clarity thesis. For Wittgenstein, at least part of the goal of both philosophical reflection and ‘aesthetic’ contemplation is to extract us from confusion by laying out things in an order that makes them intelligible, or by crafting ordered images that do as much. What is more, the achievement of both activities brings with itself a certain experience, which could with perhaps improper approximation be called ‘existential’. Or: intimately related to what one feels as the foundation of one’s form of life. Unlike with your typical aesthetic theory, it is an experience not so much of pleasure, as of deep tranquility. For the problems that have been troubling us are resolved. This position is of course not unheard-of: think about the aesthetic theories of the young Schelling or Schopenhauer, the latter of whom Wittgenstein knew very well.

However, we need to say more about the nature of the clarity that is at stake in Wittgenstein’s case. This, I shall argue, is something that should be understood in terms of the abovementioned notion of *übersichtliche Darstellung*, usually translated into English as ‘perspicuous presentation’. It seems that the first formulation of that notion is in a paragraph from the notes on Frazer (*PO*, p. 132-133), later included with some modification in *PI*, §122, which runs as follows:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of [*nicht übersehen*] the use of our words. — Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity [*Übersichtlichkeit*]. A perspicuous representation [*Die übersichtliche Darstellung*] produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connexions’. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account

[*Darstellungsform*] we give, the way we look at things.

Even though this one of the most important and well-known paragraphs of the *Investigation*, the idea has proven hard to grasp and explicate. As commentators have pointed out, one important reason is that Wittgenstein hardly enlarges on it in his published writings or *Nachlass*. As it is, the idea has proven as elusive as it is pivotal.

In one of the most extensive, influential, yet controversial accounts, Hacker (2005) has attempted to explain perspicuous presentation as a comprehensive description or tabulation of the grammar of a certain expression. Among the less commented features in his analysis is that Hacker has interestingly identified significant similarities between Wittgenstein's approach and that of Goethe's morphological method in natural science (Hacker, 2005, p. 315-317). He admits that apart from the structural similarities, there is no direct textual evidence for this reading, but aptly recalls that Wittgenstein was extensively familiar with and greatly admired Goethe, and not only for the latter's literary work.

I believe Hacker's analogy is heuristically powerful, actually more so than his overall interpretation of perspicuity as comprehensive tabulation. But it overlooks some important features of Goethe's approach that can throw a nice light of what Wittgenstein seems to be getting at. Among them is that Goethe's method involves not only comparison and variation, but also presupposes something like *seeing* the morphologically related phenomena *together in one* structure or image. That seems to be the reason Goethe calls this unified structure or image an 'idea' (e.g. *G*, p. 20, 69, 74-75). The idea is one version the so-called *Urphänomen* – something that the researcher is supposed to make appear in front of her or him in diverse fields ranging from optics to plant and animal morphology.

Back to Wittgenstein's notion of surveying, it also clearly

involves a certain kind of seeing. The various English translations might obscure that fact. A clumsy, yet I believe correct and useful literal rendering of *übersichtliche Darstellung* would be *overseeable laying-out*. And given the contexts of the expression, we have no reasons to believe that Wittgenstein is using ‘seeing’ in any importantly metaphorical way. A set of connections, a picture, a landscape are perspicuous if they can be clearly seen over in one, synoptic look. A side corollary of this reading is that it gives reasons to doubt Hacker’s interpretation, for the activity of comprehensively tabulating manifestly involves a type of explanation that is to a much greater degree discursive. But as we shall later see, there is an even stronger argument, for in a strict sense *übersichtliche Darstellung* is not supposed to give *any* explanation *at all*.

Herein lies an important difference, for Goethe’s *Urphänomen* or *Idee* is intended to have explanatory power for science. Moreover, in contrast to Goethe’s proto-Hegelian vision, Wittgenstein’s perspicuous presentation is not something akin to Hegel’s so-called ‘concrete universal’. For Goethe often explained what he called the ‘idea’ as something containing all particular instances of the phenomena under consideration. As such, the idea, naturally, is a universal, albeit one that can be seen or at least intuited. In contrast, Wittgenstein’s *übersichtliche Darstellung* seems to be a particular image or picture that, in spite of its particularity, bears some characteristically revelatory or illuminating traits. Or, it might be a clearly surveyable set or structure of such particulars allowing us to “*see connections*” (again, *PI*, §122).

But in addition to the emphasis on seeing, there is a broader, yet I believe illuminating similarity between Goethe’s and Wittgenstein’s overall attitudes to investigation. As is attested in many texts from his youth to his old age, Goethe did not envision his work as a writer as radically or specifically different from that

as a scientist. He saw the two as interrelated parts of the endeavor to understand nature, both outside us and within us, between which he saw a continuity. This can be plainly read in his 1798 poem “The Metamorphosis of Plants” (one that Hacker 2005 quotes), as well as in his late conversations with Eckermann. So Goethe was not one to subscribe to that notorious division between the ‘two cultures’ – one literary and humanist, the other scientist and naturalist – which in his time was only starting to distinctly emerge.

Things with Wittgenstein are more complicated, as he was early on conscious of precisely that widening gap. This is evident in his many dismissive remarks regarding the course taken by the science of his day, one of which I quoted above. At the same time, we have also seen that he sensed a similarity between philosophical investigations – which are supposedly relevant for science, among other things – and investigations of art. However, the gap is still manifest in that he does not talk of identity, but rather of a *queer* resemblance.

Hacker is not blind to this ‘aesthetic’ dimension of Wittgenstein’s thought. He relates clear *Darstellung* to the wonder at beauty. However, he does not give us any clue as to the relevance of wonder to grammar, which latter ultimately remains what is important to him. In a more recent paper, Savickey (2014) has made a better job of integrating the ‘aesthetic’ aspect, arguing that perspicuously presenting does not aim at achieving something final and hard set, but is always a dynamic process akin to presentation or play (*Spiel*) in theater. She furthermore has shown how kind of activity is not something that merely embellishes life, but can be quite fundamental, in that it expresses the inner character of a form of life. However, I think that although she gives a good lead, her focus on gestures and theatre gives somewhat narrows down the perspective on what is involved here.

In *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein writes:

People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc. to give them pleasure. The idea that *these have something to teach them* – that does not occur to them. (*CV*, p. 36)

This is remarkable. Wittgenstein questions the intuition that we cannot learn anything significant from what artists do. Thus in effect he questions a fundamental intuition about the very nature of learning something, i.e. of knowledge. Apparently there can be knowledge in art. But we need to be careful here. Wittgenstein is not implying that works of art should contain (encoded inside them) something akin to scientific theory. It seems that the knowledge offered by the arts is not of the type of that provided by the sciences. It is not a *theory*. But neither is Wittgenstein ‘aestheticising’ knowledge or the approach to understanding nature. He is not suggesting that scientific research should in any way be artistic. Actually, as I suggested in the beginning, he is ‘de-aestheticizing’ the arts. By suggesting that arts can bestow upon us some type of knowledge, he *both* criticizes the narrow scientist view of cognition, *and* questions the intuition that the ultimate significance of the arts is to provide us with a type of (sophisticated) pleasure.

Regarding the anti-theoretical aspect of the above remark, let us recall the original context for introducing *übersichtliche Dartellung*. In that passage, what Wittgenstein was arguing against was precisely Frazer’s *theoretical* presuppositions that made him *unable to see* just what is involved in the rituals he theorized about. Supposedly, if, instead of theorizing about them, we presented those rituals clearly and perspicuously, we would be able to see them as manifesting forms of life, systems of beliefs, sets of practices endowed with significance. In addition what irritated Wittgenstein the most was Frazer’s overall outlook: not only the particular theoretical explanations he gave to specific rituals, but the overall interpretative tactic of seeing old ritual as

some kind of primitive, naïve, under-developed theory (*PO*, p. 118-127, 152-153). Thus Frazer's error is ultimately not one of interpretation, but rather more fundamental, one having to do with his basic categories and intuition. With these rituals, one should not attempt to *explain*, but merely *describe*, an idea that again is famously reprised at a crucial place in the *Investigations*: "We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place" (*PI*, §109).

In a similar vein, Wittgenstein seems to be making the effort for opening a view at natural beauty and art from an angle usually obscured by aesthetics as a theoretical discipline. This view seems to have something in common with the correct, atheoretical view of ritual he tried to articulate in the *Remarks on Frazer*. What is more, this is a view aiming to make us see the connection between understanding art and beauty, on one hand, and understanding in general, on the other. As he wrote in the *Investigations*:

Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a sentence lies nearer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme. (*PI*, §527)

Just as philosophy cannot legitimately build a theory of art, so art cannot and should not be expected to give us a theory of life. When correctly understood, it can give us a picture, a way of seeing, which is so much as to say – an expression of a form of life. So *Darstellung* is no *Vorstellung* – not a representation that gives an image of a reality exterior to it. It is an expression, i.e. part of that reality, but one that paradigmatically or characteristically *embodies* it.

As Savickey has pointed out, art also is manifestly an activity of *darstellen*, of presenting or laying out (Savickey, 2014, pp. 111 ff.). Conversely, the experience of beauty involves synoptically overviewing what has been laid out before us. This

is not primarily something geared towards producing a feeling, but again an activity that as such corresponds to an ability. The ability to present and overview is inherent both in creating and in experiencing beauty. In this way, creating a perspicuous presentation of a grammatical problem and understanding it are akin to crafting and understanding a work of art.

To clearly lay out this standpoint, I think it is useful to recall an older understanding of art: art not as the citizen of the so-called ‘autonomous aesthetic domain’, but rather art as *craft*. An ability to be cultivated, yet with no fixed rules – just as Wittgenstein never formulates any fixed methods for achieving perspicuity about language. Again, artistic craft is not primarily ‘aesthetic’, not merely about a certain kind of sophisticated experience, appreciation, or judgment. It crafts tools: for orienting oneself and learning one’s way about, for gaining oversight, for achieving a clear understanding of – or within – a form of life. What such an interpretation involves can and must be fleshed out in much greater detail and richness, but this task cannot be fulfilled unless we throw out the theoretical presupposition that Wittgenstein is doing aesthetics.

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Beyond Wittgenstein's Musical Formalism

Marina Bakalova

ISSK, BAS

marina.bakalova@gmail.com

Abstract: *In his scattered remarks on music, Wittgenstein adopts a rule-based account of musical understanding also known as musical formalism. This is the view that understanding a piece of music does not presuppose matching the musical sequence with one's own mental states. It entails instead, recognizing the proper use of conventions and theoretical terminology of a given musical system, such as the Western musical system. I argue that Wittgenstein's musical formalism is misguided. It raises important questions that it has no resources to answer. The opposite view, according to which musical understanding is tightly related to cognitive, emotional or imaginative states of the listener, can answer these questions better. We have to take into account that if Wittgenstein were to witness the cognitive revolution he would most probably have changed his mind concerning scientific potential of psychology and our grasp of the mental realm. In particular, he may have to accept that certain psychological phenomena account for the appropriateness of our inter-relational comparisons.*

Key words: *Wittgenstein, musical formalism, cognitive revolution*

In his later period, Wittgenstein famously suggests that communicative activities (as well as thinking, understanding

etc.) need not be considered as correlated to mental acts or states. Instead, on his view, the ability to follow the practical conventions of communication is, by itself, necessary and, together with our well-informed contextual associations, sufficient to generate the meaning of our communicative acts. In his scattered remarks on music, Wittgenstein adopts the same position in relation to musical expression, and musical understanding. In *PI* (pp. 181–83), for instance, he claims that sensation is irrelevant to the meaning of a musical phrase. Hence, understanding a piece of music does not presuppose matching the musical sequence with one's own mental states. It entails instead, recognizing the proper use of conventions and theoretical terminology of a given musical system, such as the Western musical system. I will call this position “rule-based account of musical understanding, or “musical formalism” together with Ahonen (2005).

In this article, I will argue that Wittgenstein's musical formalism is misguided. It raises important questions that it has no resources to answer. The opposite view, according to which musical understanding is tightly related to cognitive, emotional or imaginative states of the listener, can answer these questions better. I offer a positive mentalist alternative to musical formalism claiming that the primary function of musical expression is to articulate phenomenal character of real or imaginary mental states thereby making them no less than directly perceptible to the listener. I claim, in contrast to what Wittgenstein thought in his later work, that relatively stable meaning is encoded by some of the aesthetic properties of musical works. This is demonstrated by an experimentally proven cognitive phenomenon, the phenomenon of inter-modal congruence that can be seen as central to our capacity of understanding and appreciating art (Green 2007, Ch. 7). Such a mentalist approach to musical understanding is compatible with the idea that knowledge of musical theory and musical culture

generally increases our understanding of musical meaning. More importantly, in certain cases, inter modal congruence accounts for the appropriateness of our inter-relational comparisons which formalists think singlehandedly determine the meaning of musical works.

1. *The statement F*

A central message of Wittgenstein's *PI* is that there is nothing like stable meaning. Despite Wittgenstein's opposition to any sort of theory in this period, Garry Hagberg (2017) meaningfully systematizes his anti-essentialist ideas about language and their counterpart in aesthetics. He coins Wittgenstein's late position *Relational Determination of Content*. According to this view, each meaningful expression has relationally embedded properties that the interlocutor is supposed to get if she is to understand the expression. Hagberg shows in intricate detail how this view underlies Wittgenstein's remarks of music. Applying Hagberg's interpretation to Wittgenstein's anti-mentalism yields the conviction that it is impossible to imagine our own states without using public language and public conventions. Instead we can suggest comparisons between publically accessible objects, but the content of our mental states always remains private and inaccessible to others. Thus the combination between relational determination of content and Wittgenstein's anti-mentalism entails the following statement:

F: The constitutive relational properties of a meaningful expression or artwork have no context-invariant meaning determined by one's mental states.

In what follows we will take F as our target statement. First, we will try to show in more detail how F underlies Wittgenstein's view of musical understanding and then we will raise our objections against it.

2. *Music, Facial Recognition, and Menschenkenntnis*

Music typically expresses mental states, such as emotions or feelings. Wittgenstein seems to agree with that:

‘The aim of music: to communicate feeling.’

But then he continues:

”Connected with this: We may say correctly “his face has the same expression now as previously” even though measurement yielded different results on the two occasions.”⁵⁸

The analogy between music and facial recognition is considered central for Wittgenstein’s reflections on music and it gives specificity to the statement F when applied to music. There is a single core, around which the interpretation of this analogy circulates. To start with, the tricky element is that the second part of the quote stands in contrast to the first part. The idea is that facial expressions are not reflections of mental states. Instead, facial expressions function as a part of many public criteria of applying certain mental terms. The same holds for music by analogy. Yes, it “expresses” feelings, according to Wittgenstein, but in the musical gesture, so to speak, there is nothing beyond certain ways of applying mental terms. Expression then is something like a craft. It is not a medium in which the artisan “pours” one’s own feelings. It is a medium in which the artisan demonstrates her craftsmanship or ability to work with public signs to suggest as-if-feelings, *similes*, to provoke associations of the audience. The resulting work can be sophisticated or not based on that ability. Although musical communication is nothing like making you understand my feelings, music can nevertheless transmit understanding of humankind (*Menschenkenntnis*).

In 1948, Wittgenstein explicitly wrote: “Understanding music is a manifestation of human life” (*CV*, 80). This idea goes beyond the notorious rule following, or at least beyond a single language game. Béla Szabados nicely puts it: for Wittgenstein

58 Wittgenstein 1940, quoted in Hagberg (2017, 76)

“music is not alone, but it reverberates and resonates with the whole field of our language games—with our artistic and social practices.” (Szabados 2006, p. 657). Eran Guter stresses that *Menschenkenntnis* is not a body of theoretical knowledge like psychology. Rather, it is a skill, or a set of skills, which some people have a more intuitive grasp of than others (Guter 2017, 236). Guter thereby links Wittgenstein’s understanding of music to the Romantic idea of depth that is typically German. The surprising element related to that interpretation is that Wittgenstein purportedly sees the kinship of music to the inexhaustible domain of interrelated comparisons as concealment. Guter explains that in the context of Wittgenstein’s final writings musical expression is grounded in imponderable evidence; evidence that cannot be recognized or explained by reference to rules, yet it is accepted by those who are experienced with the infinite variation of human physiognomy:

“Understanding music is always in *mediis rebus*, enmeshed with human life, and that is why we begin by misunderstanding, that is, by noticing that there is something concealed, or somehow hidden or held back” (Guter, 2017, 243)

That concealment, according to Guter leads to revelation. There are two problems with this idea. First it would be quite hard, if ever possible to explain how concealment leads to revelation. Admittedly, there is something about that in the facial recognition analogy. Despite your painful screaming I cannot perceive your pain, or understand how your pain feels to you. It is concealed for me. However, your screaming in pain makes me suffer with you; your scared face can makes me worry. Such cases can sometimes yield to revelation, but not because of concealment in my opinion, neither because one makes educational guesses based on imponderable evidence. Rather, it is because of emotional contagion. So secondly, facial gestures do not usually work by concealment. They are systematic indications of particular

emotions. They are not meant to conceal but to reveal.

On Wittgensteinean picture, understanding life through music is actually enmeshed with how things feel to us but this aspect is contingent to an extent of being irrelevant to what we are supposed to understand, the humankind in its complexity. I disagree with that irrelevance claim. I certainly agree that the depth of human life lies in concealment most of the time, but I am prone to think that the moments when we listen to music are kind of exceptional. I do not believe that music suffers from cognitive and expressive impotence to share with sufficient clarity the complexity or depth of human life. I hold the straightforward belief that music reveals something from that depth period. Very often music reveals the phenomenal content of our mental lives; it articulates such content in detail and I will show how in the last part of this article. Misunderstanding of musical expression (which accompanies concealment) is not a standard situation when we listen to music. Usually it is clear what kind of emotion, mood or feeling music expresses.

Roger Scruton (2017) offers a more promising interpretation of Wittgenstein's attempt to explain music by analogy to facial recognition. He suggests that Wittgenstein does not give a full-fledged argument about musical understanding, but he nevertheless makes a contribution by connecting music to facial expressions. Scruton acknowledges that Wittgenstein's conception of understanding facial expressions seems to stay at the level of recognizing expressions on another's face. However, Scruton wants to take this notion further by claiming that one can gain access to the other person's first-person knowledge, i.e. knowledge of 'what it is like'. He thinks that we can adopt the other person's perspective by *imagining* her expressed state beyond the immediate musical Gestalt'. (pp. 7–9). I think, and I will try to show that the relation of adopting the other person's perspective can be even stronger than imagining. It can be a

perceptual relation.

Scruton's interpretation of Wittgenstein was criticized by Ahonen (2005). She points out that for Wittgenstein the connection between meaning and understanding is not one of making a connection between the sign and its meaning (an object, event, or property) 'in the understanding of those who use the sign'. Rather, the meaning of the sign is its rule-governed use in its context, and understanding it is nothing but the ability to follow these rules. (p. 514).

From what we have seen so far, I don't think that Wittgenstein's analogy between music and facial recognition is really productive in explaining how we understand music. Understanding music is not like reading faces. It is more than that. It enables us to *hear* and *actually perceive* certain emotions in their phenomenal detail. Unlike facial recognition, music makes the phenomenal content of one's state available to the listener. Precisely in this sense, it can be a revelation.

3. *Internal and External Interrelational Comparisons*

Let us try a more general strategy to explain musical understanding based on Wittgenstein's ideas. Gary Hagberg suggests that relational interconnections are constitutive not only of the meaning of our sentences, but also of musical themes (and artworks more broadly). This is the way in which art and language are analogous without being the same thing.

In order to better explain the constitutive nature of relational interconnections, Hagberg distinguishes between internal and external relational interconnections. Internal interconnections pertain to the structure of the artwork. To illustrate that, he gives an example of a poem by Frida Schanz, quoted by Wittgenstein himself:

Foggy day. Gray autumn haunts us.
Laughter seems tainted;

the world is as silent today as though it had died last night.

In the red-gold hedge fog monsters are brewing; the day lies asleep.

The day will not awaken. (Hagberg 2017, 66)

Wittgenstein notes that he does not know if the first words ‘Foggy day’ are the title or the first line of the poem. If “gray” is the first word, Hagberg claims, then the poem becomes trivial and it “changes the rhythm of the whole poem.” In the two cases we have the same words, but different meaning depending on the relation of the first sentence to the rest of the poem. This example shows that internal relations are constitutive of the artwork and indispensable. Hagberg points out that because of the indispensable nature of its internal structure, the meaning of an artwork cannot be transmitted in any other way but by reiterating the very same artwork. Any attempt to translate it would be a violation of these internal, constitutive interrelations and would entail a substantial loss of its meaning.

There is a problem lurking here, that is only indirectly linked to my argument. The problem springs from the possibility of perfectly recreating the internal relations of an artwork in an indistinguishable forgery that would prompt the same relational interconnections. In this case, a question follows: is the artwork really indispensable? This question is difficult to answer if we stay at the level of interconnected internal structure only. My answer would be that there is a mental part expressed in the original that was plagiarized in the forgery. But, according to Wittgenstein’s treatment this mental part escapes the audience’s gaze in both cases. So, internal relations may fail to account for the indispensability of an artwork after all.

Hagberg points out that Wittgenstein discussed also external interconnections which contribute to aesthetic appreciation and interpretation of artworks. They include comparing artistic styles, observing relations and kindships between various

cultural phenomena, etc. Hagberg claims that not all relational comparisons are legitimate. He excludes “a category of relational interconnections that go too far, or develop without restraint or without an awareness of and respect for prior established relations.” (68) Hagberg’s suggestion is intuitively clear, but it seems to me that there are two cases in which we can *legitimately* draw relational comparisons without restraint, and without respect for previously established connections. One can 1) read some artworks in an appropriately creative way whatever that means and 2) one can have an insight about an artwork that nobody has had before. Such comparisons would be illegitimate on Hagberg’s proposal. We need a clearer criterion that would, at the same time, unbound the countless possibilities for a legitimate artistic expression and legitimate understanding thereof.

4. *A mentalist alternative to Wittgenstein’s musical formalism.*

In the last chapter of his book “Self-Expression”, Mitchell Green (2007) develops a theory of artistic expression. Green points out that the main role of artistic expression is to show how a feeling feels. This is possible, he claims, thanks to the phenomenon of inter-modal congruence (also known as cross-modal congruence) (Green 2007: 178-182). According to this phenomenon, some sensations within one sensory modality seem to bear more of an affinity to some sensations within another sensory modality than to others. Examples of the phenomenon include: people systematically relating high pitch with bright light and low pitch with gloomy light. The same holds between sensations, moods, emotions, and all states with phenomenal character. For example, the major chord sounds systematically cheerful to us, whereas the minor chord sounds sad. Other examples that Green cites concern people thinking that yellow is more like the sound of a piccolo than it is like the sound of an oboe; that the smell of sulfur is more

like rough than it is like smooth; that the taste of lemon is more like the minor chord C–E flat–G than it is like the major chord C–E–G, etc. (179) The congruence, Green notices, holds in an irreversible way:

“(S)ome kinds of inter- as well as intrapersonal inversions do not seem possible. It is difficult, for instance, to see how there could be an interpersonal inversion as between pain and pleasure. This would require that the experience that I feel upon cutting my hand with a knife is like the experience you feel upon stroking velvet. Likewise, we can rule out the possibility that a minor chord sounds sad to me but happy to you.” (184)

Green provides a methodologically insightful explanation of why and how the congruence occurs. He offers a multi-dimensional explanatory model for understanding the congruence. Green suggests that our sensations, emotions and moods may be described along a number of dimensions, including the following three: *intense/mild*, *pleasant/unpleasant*, *dynamic/static*. Green limits his talk to these three basic dimensions for simplicity, having in mind that the theory allows for introduction of unlimited number of such dimensions. Hence, he introduces the idea of a three-dimensional space. He asks us to imagine the above mentioned dimensions as placed in a coordinate system creating a three-space. (179) He further assumes that we perceive phenomenal characteristics as regions in the three-space. There are few possibilities to locate states in that space. First, imagine a joy which stands phenomenally in a particular intersection between the three dimensions (say rather intense, rather pleasant and relatively dynamic). It will be represented with one point in the three-space, an intersection between the three parameters. We will call these points “regions”. Alternatively, a state might have phenomenal characteristics only along the intense-mild dimension, but not in the other two dimensions. That state will

be mapped as a single point on one dimension only. Finally, a state might be two-dimensional, for instance pleasant and mild but neither dynamic nor static. For instance, the taste of a smooth cream. Then, it will be mapped with two dots on two regions along the intense-mild and pleasant-unpleasant dimensions.

The idea of the three-space provides a powerful explanation of how a stimulus can express states with phenomenal character. Compare our example of a joy which stands phenomenally in a particular intersection between the three dimensions (intense, pleasant and dynamic) with an auditory experience that occupies the same or very close particular intersection of these three dimensions (i.e. an intense, pleasant and dynamic sequence of sounds). The two experiences feel the same because they are congruent in the three-space. Because of their congruence, that sequence of sounds can express that kind of joy, a listener can hear it as that kind of joy. To put it more formally, let us distinguish between an expressive stimulus “ES” and an expressed state, “E”. We can plausibly assume that when an ES overlaps with a region or a set of regions in the three-space that E occupies, it expresses E. In the case of precise mapping between the regional spaces of E and ES, ES will be quite informative about the qualitative character of E. If E is too complex, presumably ES can give us an idea of how E feels even if it does not map all the regions of E. Certainly there is an issue of how much overlapping is enough to make a qualitative character of a state plausibly recognizable.

Let us turn back to music. Music is an art that develops through time. So, if we want to use the three-space theory to explain musical expressiveness we will have to assume that musical expression draws a trajectory of expressive stimuli or regional activations in a multidimensional space and in a multidimensional time. Musical trajectory (MT) is the musical counterpart of what I just called ES with its progression in time. Imagine a state E, developing in time from point A to point D,

and activating different regions in the three-space at different moments in time: ABC and D. MT expresses E by activating the same three dimensional regions as E. Thus MT enables a listener to experience through her perceptual imagination the phenomenal character of a mental episode developing in time.

I would like to provide some examples of how Western musical theory allows composers to “describe” mental attitudes by using the three-space theory. I will give just a few examples based on tempo, dynamics and harmony.

Musical tempo allows one to place a musical fragment along static-dynamic dimension. The standard expressive tempo forms vary from *grave* (very, very slow) to *largo* (very slow) to *adagio* (quite slow) to *andante* (a walking pace) to *moderato* (moderate) to *allegro* (fast and cheerful) to *vivace* (lively) to *presto* (very fast) and finally to *prestissimo* (fastest). The overall shape of the melody going upward, downward, or remaining static also contributes to that.

Another chapter from the musical theory, dynamics, allows composers to express states along intense-mild dimension ranging from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. Directions to change dynamics either suddenly or gradually, on the other hand, enable ranging of intensity through time. Here the standard possibilities are *crescendo*, *decrescendo* or *diminuendo*, *sforzando*, etc

What about pleasant/unpleasant dimension? Music can express different pleasant states such as joy, liberation, triumph, romance etc. On the other hand, it can express sadness, drama, tragedy, horror, anxiety, etc. and other unpleasant emotions, feelings and moods. There are various ways to suggest an unpleasant emotion in a piece of music. One way is to accelerate tension, typical of emotions like anxiety, distress, drama, and horror. This can be done by increasing the density of the harmony, i.e. by harmonic accumulation. The effect can be achieved also through making the rhythm denser as well as through gradually increasing the

density of the texture to *tutti*. We encounter such a way of building tension in “The Death of Tybalt” from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* by Prokofiev, where the timpani beat and the full capacity of the orchestral *tutti* create the feeling of strong tension and tragedy. Another example is the 4th part of Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* “Thunder Storm”, where we can notice an increase of density of the sound and rhythm, and the use of *crescendo* representing anxiety in the face of a developing storm. Sadness falls in a phenomenally different group of unpleasant states. It is silent, and slow. Sadness can be represented by using minor harmony, timbre in the middle to low register, and articulation in legato.

On the other hand, there are various ways to express pleasant emotions. For example, the choice of a theme is quite important: a well-connected, uninterrupted melody, predominantly in legato, consonant in terms of intervals and harmony creates a feeling of pleasure. For such an effect, melody should have certain diversity that helps the development of the phrase. In other words, it should not be boring. Appropriate articulation and diversity of tempo also contribute to expressing pleasant emotions.

These are just some basic possibilities. A composer can use various expressive means simultaneously to place a musical fragment in a single/multidimensional region, and thus to express and articulate the phenomenal character of a state developing in time. Western musical system alone is a well-developed and structured palette of such expressive means.

Applied to music, Green’s multi-space model has a significant advantage over Wittgenstein’s formalist theory. First of all, it provides adequacy conditions for ascribing expressive content to music, i.e for musical understanding. In many cases, x can be expressive of p , q , y , or z depending on the associations of the listener. Nevertheless, all these ascriptions can be adequate to x if they are congruent with x . “Being adequate to x ”, according to the

three-space theory means occupying the same region in the three-space that *x* occupies. So, the listener can adequately associate *x* with any possible state that occupies the same region in the three-space that *x* occupies. Adequacy is the right term here and, of course, it is different from truth. Yet, in some cases, the musical context enables us to form an opinion around one particular state that is the most plausible referent of the expression.

This model does not exclude inter-relational comparisons to play a role in our understanding of musical works. These comparisons, when strictly aesthetical, would also be subject to the above mentioned adequacy conditions. In order to be adequate, they must be based on congruence with the musical work. For instance, Wittgenstein's statement that Brahms did in full rigor what Mandelson did only half rigorously (Wittgenstein 1931) would be adequate if based on certain congruencies between Brahms and Mandelson.

In conclusion, the development of cognitive science after Wittgenstein shows that his doubt of the science of psychology was premature. At the same time, it is highly probable that he would have changed his mind were he to face the cognitive revolution. So, I think that we should not be afraid to reinterpret his ideas in the light of the new discoveries about human mind.

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IV.
ETHICS AND
WAY OF LIFE

The Transcendentality of Wittgenstein's Ethics

Neşe Aksoy

Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Philosophy Department
(PHD Student)

aksoynesee@gmail.com

Abstract: *Ludwig Wittgenstein bluntly suggests that the ethical propositions are nonsensical.*

This argument of Wittgenstein is widely interpreted by the logical positivists in the way that ethics for Wittgenstein is a meaningless phenomenon altogether which cannot be talked about.

However, this paper opposes the view that Wittgenstein denounces ethics as a meaningless subject.

On the contrary, it puts stress on the fact that although Wittgenstein sees that ethics is nonsensical within the boundaries of propositional expression, he claims that it has a transcendental form of truth and meaning which discloses itself in the way the subject introduces it into the world and manifests it in a good and fulfilled life.

In other words, I argue that even though ethics is nonsensical within the scope of propositional expression for Wittgenstein, it has a meaning as a transcendental truth that shows itself through the ethical life of the subject.

Key Words: *nonsensical, ethics, Wittgenstein, proposition, transcendental, truth.*

*“Ethics is transcendental.
Good and evil only enter through the subject. And the
subject is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world”*
(Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 79).

A) Introduction

In “A Lecture on Ethics” Ludwig Wittgenstein sets out by remarking that, *“Ethics is an enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living.”* (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 5) Similarly, in *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Wittgenstein utters that “the good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of the world” (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 73). Hence, Wittgenstein regards ethics as a highly essential human activity: an enquiry into the meaning of life and the world. However, this idea of ethics as a highly meaningful activity of human being is interrupted by the suggestion of Wittgenstein which says that ethics is nonsensical in the sense that it is impossible to formulate ethical propositions. As Wittgenstein writes in “A Lecture on Ethics”:

That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 11-12).

By this means, Wittgenstein seems to be offering a controversial account of ethics by holding that ethics which is

envisaged as a highly meaningful human activity at the outset is then denounced to have any sense and significance. First, I should say that this idea of nonsensicality of ethics in Wittgenstein is commonly reduced to a positivistic reading which entails that ethics is a meaningless subject that cannot be talked about. According to the positivistic account, ethics is a supernatural and mystical phenomenon which cannot be systematically and scientifically articulated through propositions. It is basically assumed that ethics is not a logically valid subject to be talked about. Therefore the mystical nature of ethics is reduced to triviality and meaninglessness of ethics as such. Nonetheless, if we read Wittgenstein from a non-positivistic perspective, we uncover that the inexpressibility of ethics in Wittgenstein, namely the fact that we cannot formulate ethical propositions, does not necessarily mean that ethics is a meaningless and trivially mystical subject. On the contrary we shall argue that ethics in Wittgenstein is attributed such a transcendental and elevated form of truth that it extends beyond the boundaries of propositional expression. In other words, it can be held that the nonsensicality of ethics is essentially because of its being a transcendental and higher form of truth that cannot be limited to the scope of propositions. In *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says, “6. 42: *So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 86). And he adds, “6. 522: *There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 89). In these remarks, Wittgenstein hints that ethics is a mystical and high subject which cannot be put into words but which expresses itself in the way it shows/manifests itself. This suggests that ethics for Wittgenstein is not necessarily a meaningless activity altogether. Rather it is a transcendental form of truth which cannot be articulated in propositional expression but which discloses its existence in the way it shows/manifests itself.

To make my argument more clear, I would like to go back to “A Lecture on Ethics” where Wittgenstein distinguishes between the relative sense and absolute/ethical sense of facts (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 5-7). In this article Wittgenstein proposes that in the relative sense of facts and propositions which are expressible through propositions, the facts are arbitrarily determined. Yet, in the absolute/ethical sense of the facts which are ineffable through propositions, there is a logical necessity that binds the facts. To clarify this distinction, Wittgenstein gives an example of a right road in relative sense and a right road in absolute sense (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 7). He utters that the right road in relative sense is the road which leads to the arbitrarily predetermined end; the right road in absolute sense, on the other hand, is the road which would be taken by a logical necessity by everybody and people would be ashamed if they do not take it. In other words, while the right road in a relative sense is to be taken arbitrarily, the right road in an absolute sense is to be taken necessarily. At this juncture, drawing a parallel between the absolutely right road and absolute/ethical good Wittgenstein describes the absolute/ethical good as follows: “[absolute/ethical good] would be one which everybody, independent of his tastes and inclinations, would necessarily bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about” (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 7). In that sense, Wittgenstein suggests that the absolute or ethical good is a logically necessary concept which cannot be dismissed. He basically puts forward that although the absolute good is inexpressible and nonsensical within the confines of the propositional expression it has a logical necessity in itself. Hence, in this paper it will be argued that the nonsensicality of ethics within the confines of propositional expression does not necessarily render ethics a trivial and contingent concept in Wittgenstein. On the contrary, it will be argued that the nonsensicality of ethics within the boundaries of propositional expression is acknowledged by Wittgenstein to be

caused by its high and transcendental⁵⁹ form of truth which can only be expressed in the way it shows/manifests itself.

B) The Boundaries of Propositional Expression

One of the fundamental concerns of Ludwig Wittgenstein in his canonical work *Tractacus Logico-Philosophicus*⁶⁰ is to demarcate what is expressible/sayable through propositions and what is not. To put it another way, Wittgenstein points to the fact that there is a limitation on what is expressible within the realm of propositional expression. Initially, he suggests that one can legitimately talk about only what is logical. The illogical concepts or facts, on the other hand, are held to be inexpressible. In *Tractacus* he writes,

3.032: It is as impossible to represent in language anything that ‘contradicts logic’ as it is in geometry to represent by its co-ordinates a figure that contradicts the laws of space, or to give the co-ordinates of a point that does not exist (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 13).

As Wittgenstein puts it above, anything that is illogical has no correspondence in propositional expression. Hence, Wittgenstein adopts the view that logicity is the grounding principle to determine what is expressible/sayable and what is inexpressible/unsayable in language.

The idea behind the fact that the language can express only what is logical is because logic is directly linked to reality in Wittgenstein. So, the second phenomenon that demarcates the boundaries of propositional expression is the reality. In *Tractacus* Wittgenstein hints that logic is basic to our understanding and construction of the reality (world). He basically says that the

59 For Wittgenstein the term ‘transcendental’ means to be outside of the world and to be a condition for the world.

60 In the article this book will be shortened as *Tractacus*.

whole reality (world) is constituted by the states of affairs (facts) that emerge on the logical space:

1.13: The facts in logical space are the world (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 5).

2: What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of Affairs (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 5)

2.04: The totality of existing states of affairs is the world (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 12).

2.06: The existence and non-existence of states of affairs is Reality (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 12).

2.063: The sum-total of reality is the world (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 8).

In this regard, Wittgenstein holds that the logical space is the necessary ground on which the the world (reality) as the totality of states of affairs (facts) is constructed. In other words, Wittgenstein observes that the reality unfolds itself through the logical form. Moreover, it is suggested that the logical form is the ground on which we picture the reality (world). Wittgenstein utters,

2.1: We picture facts to ourselves (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 9).

2.182: Every picture is *at the same time* a logical one. (On the other hand, not every picture is, for example, a spatial one.)

2.19: Logical pictures can depict the world (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 11).

Hence, Wittgenstein admits that the logical form is the way we understand and represent the world (reality.) Accordingly, in Wittgenstein's view, our logical pictures with regard to the world (reality) are acknowledged to be the true depictions of the reality whereas the illogical pictures are acknowledged to be false and nonsensical. Thus, turning to our previous discussion about the

relationship between logic, reality and propositional expression, we shall suggest that our propositions can express only what is logical because it is what exists in reality. Anything outside of the logical form, on the other hand, is acknowledged to be inexpressible in language because it does not exist in reality. Hence, the Wittgensteinian theory of language does basically hold that the propositional expression is a mirror of the reality (world) which unfolds itself through logic. Joachim Shulte expresses this direct relationship between language, logic and reality in Wittgenstein by saying that the application of logic determines the elementary propositions which in consequence determines the state of affairs as the fact of the world. Therefore he says that the structure of language through using the logic determines the structure of the world (reality) (Schulte, 1992, p. 64).

According to Wittgenstein, another phenomenon that demarcates the scope of language is the scientificity. This being so, Wittgenstein offers that we can formulate propositions only about the scientific facts whereas we cannot represent in language anything that is unscientific. At 4.11 in *Tractatus* he says: “*The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences)*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 29). Here Wittgenstein claims that the reality (world) is constituted by the scientific facts and our propositions can express them as they are. Similarly, in “A Lecture on Ethics” he utters the following: “*Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense*” (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 7). In here Wittgenstein suggests that only the scientific propositions do have sense and significance in language. He therefore hints that something unscientific has no sense and significance within the scope of language. With regards, Piergiorgio Donatelli in his article “Reshaping Ethics After Wittgenstein” says that “the space of science is the space of what we can say” (Donatelli, 2014, p.

216).

In sum, the boundaries of propositional expression in Wittgenstein is shaped by the logicity, reality and scientificity in that we can formulate propositions only about what is logical, real and scientific.

C) Ethics and the Boundaries of Propositional Expression

Based on the basic assumption of Wittgenstein which suggests that we can formulate propositions only about what is real, logical and scientific, I think it is possible to draw a conclusion that ethics is an unreal, illogical and unscientific phenomenon in Wittgenstein as he bluntly claims that ethical propositions are nonsensical. This is utterly the conclusion that the logical positivists reach with regard to the Wittgensteinian ethics. They basically argue that ethic is a trivially metaphysical subject in Wittgenstein about which one cannot offer any proposition. But before we proceed to discussing the logical positivistic view of the Wittgensteinian ethics, I think we should first go over the nonsensicality of ethics in Wittgenstein. As I noted in the introduction, Wittgenstein bluntly utters that the ethical propositions have no sense and significance within the confines of propositions. To put it shortly, he says that ethics cannot be put into words. In “A Lecture on Ethics” he writes,

That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 11-12).

In the passage above, Wittgenstein points out that the formulation of ethical propositions means to go beyond the limits of language which he finds to be an impossible attempt. To put it more clearly, Wittgenstein admits that ethics is inexpressible through our propositions because it is beyond the world (reality) and language. He also claims that ethics is a supernatural phenomenon that cannot be grasped scientifically. In “A Lecture on Ethics” he says, *“Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it”* (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 7). This being so, Wittgenstein puts that ethics is outside of the limits of the sense and significance of language and science. Put it another way, because Wittgenstein admits that only the scientific and natural facts have sense and significance within the boundaries of propositions, he claims that ethics is outside of this realm. In this regard, Jens Kertscher in his article “Sense of Ethics and Ethical Sense” says that the ethics in Wittgensteinian sense is not a subject to be studied by the traditional methods of a normative and rational science (Arnswald, 2009, p. 89).

The Wittgensteinian idea that ethics has no sense and significance within the confines of the propositional expression leads the logical positivists to conclude that ethics is a trivially metaphysical and illogical concept in Wittgenstein. In this regard, the verifiability theory of the logical positivists assumes that Wittgenstein’s theory of ethics attempts to eliminate any proposition on ethics by admitting it as an unscientific and illogical subject. Stuart Greenstreet in his article “Wittgenstein, Tolstoy and the Folly of Logical Positivism” says the following:

So the principle of verification was supposed to be a criterion to determine whether or not a sentence is literally meaningful: and the criterion was that the user must know the conditions under which the sentence's assertions are verifiable... Their principle of verification meant that only propositions concerned with matters of empirically-verifiable fact ('It is still raining'), or the logical relationship between concepts ('A downpour is heavier than a shower') are meaningful. Propositions that fall into neither of these camps fail to satisfy the principle, they argued, and consequently lack sense. It follows, therefore, that the propositions of ethics, aesthetics, and religion, are meaningless (Greenstreet, 2014).

Above, Stuart Greenstreet argues that the verifiability theory of logical positivists regards ethics in Wittgenstein as a meaningless (senseless) subject because it cannot be verified through an empirical fact. Moreover, Aviashai Margalit in *Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy* explains Rudolph Carnap's view about the Wittgensteinian impact on the logical positivism in the following way: "*On Carnap's testimony, Wittgenstein influenced the anti-metaphysical move by introducing what he calls 'Wittgenstein's principle of verifiability'. This principle was adopted by the Vienna Circle as a tool for disqualifying metaphysical sentences as 'meaningless' in not being verifiable in principle. Verification is what gives a sentence its meaning*" (Glock-Hyman, 2009, p. 11). So, the logical positivists commonly receive Wittgenstein as an anti-metaphysical philosopher who finds the metaphysical concepts utterly nonsensical.

However, as Stuart Greenstreet points out in his article, I believe that the logical positivists' way of reading the Wittgensteinian metaphysics is quite limited. To me, this way of reading misses the point that Wittgenstein does not limit truth to what is expressible through propositions but hints to the transcendental and metaphysical realities which disclose themselves in the way they

show themselves (Greenstreet, 2014). Similarly, B. R. Tilghman in *Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetic* says that the logical positivists have so badly misunderstood Wittgenstein by assimilating his distinction between the meaningfulness and meaninglessness to their verifiability theory (Tilghman, 1991, p. 44). According to Tilghman, by making the distinction between what can be said and what cannot be said, Wittgenstein does not necessarily denounce the metaphysical concepts like the questions about the human value and the meaning of human life etc. altogether as the logical positivists suggest. To Tilghman, what Wittgenstein simply does is to separate the realm of metaphysical concepts from the realm of scientific questions. Hence, Wittgenstein identifies the realm of science as an expressible/sayable phenomenon, whereas he identifies the realm of metaphysics as an unsayable phenomenon. The unsayability of metaphysics for Wittgenstein, however, does not reduce it into a nonsense because it has its own way of truth and expression. It is transcendental and it expresses itself by showing/manifesting itself. In this regard, in line with Greenstreet and Tilghman, I believe that Wittgenstein does not disregard metaphysics altogether but he points out that it has a different form of truth in itself. Therefore, I think even though ethics for Wittgenstein is inexpressible through propositions, it has a transcendental form of truth which discloses its existence in the way it shows/manifests itself.

D) The Transcendentality of Ethics

For Wittgenstein there are some transcendental truths which are not scientific, logically explicable, and sensical in propositional sense: logical form, philosophy, aesthetic and ethics. Before I proceed to discussing ethics as a transcendental form of truth in particular, I shall go over the logical form, philosophy and aesthetics to see the connection between them as forms of truth which cannot be expressed through propositions but which show

themselves as such. Regarding the logical form, Wittgenstein remarks in *Tractacus* that although every state of affair (fact) in logical space is expressible through propositions, the logical form itself cannot be expressed. At 4.12 he says, “*Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it—logical form. In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 30-31). In the quotation, Wittgenstein discusses that logical form is the source of any kind of propositional expression but it cannot be expressed through propositions itself. He puts that logical form is on the boundary of the world (reality) and therefore formulating propositions about logical form would mean to jump out of the boundaries of the world (reality). In that sense, Wittgenstein hints that the logical form is a transcendental phenomenon to what is expressible in language in that it cannot be expressed through propositions. The inexpressibility of the logical form might suggest that the logical form is an unscientific and unreal phenomenon because, as we handled before, there is a direct link between the propositional expression, reality and scientificity. However, it is clear that the point that Wittgenstein makes by putting the logical form outside of the world (reality) is not that simple. It is obvious that Wittgenstein does not simply argue that the logical form is an inexpressible and nonsensical phenomenon. Indeed, when we proceed in *Tractacus*, we see that Wittgenstein attributes a fundamental place to the logical form in his ontology. He says,

5.552: The ‘experience’ that we need in order to understand logic is not that something or other is the state of things, but that something *is*: that, however, is *not* an experience. Logic *is prior* to every experience—that something *is so* (Wittgenstein, 1974,

p. 66).

5.61: Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 68).

6.13: Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world. Logic is transcendental (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 78).

Here Wittgenstein basically argues that logical form is a transcendental phenomenon that is not immanent in the world as part of the states of affairs but it is what pervades and grounds it. In this sense, the fact that Wittgenstein envisages logical form as a concept that is outside of the world (reality) does not necessarily mean that the logic is an unreal phenomenon. Instead, Wittgenstein points to the fact that logical form is a fundamental phenomenon for the state of affairs in the world (reality) as it is what ultimately guarantees their existence. Furthermore at 4.121 he suggests that the logical form is not completely inexpressible. Rather he puts forward that although the logical form cannot be expressed in the propositional way, it expresses itself by showing/displaying itself.

Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them. What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent. What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language. Propositions *show* the logical form of reality. They display it (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 31).

Above, Wittgenstein asserts that even though logical form cannot be put into words via propositions, it is mirrored in them (Schulte, 1992, p. 56). More specifically, he proposes that the logical form cannot be talked about in propositional language but it shows/displays itself in language in its own right. In that sense, Wittgenstein is of the opinion that the logical form has no sense and significance within the boundaries of propositional

expression, but it discloses its existence and meaning in the way it shows/displays itself.

Wittgenstein's idea of logical form as a transcendental truth that cannot be expressed in propositional sense is very much akin to his notion of philosophy. In *Tractacus*, Wittgenstein utters that philosophy is not a propositional activity in itself:

4.11: The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences).

4.111: Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.) (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 29).

Distinguishing philosophy from the natural sciences, Wittgenstein asserts that philosophy is not a propositional way of understanding or seeing the world (reality). He basically believes that philosophy does not aim to come up with philosophical propositions. He rather describes philosophy as an activity of clarification:

4.112: Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 29-30).

Here it is argued that philosophy is not a doctrine of propositions but an activity of clarification of thoughts and opinion. In *Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy* Avishai Margalit says: "[Wittgenstein] calls for a sharp division of labor: science

is the realm of explanation and causality, whereas philosophy is the realm of elucidation and understanding” (Glock-Hyman, 2009, p. 2). By this, Margalit means that sciences and philosophy in Wittgenstein belong to different realms: one is explanatory and propositional whereas the other is elucidative and non-propositional. The non-propositionality of philosophy suggests that it is outside of the boundaries of logic and world (reality). It is therefore envisaged to be a meta-activity of clarifying the thoughts and opinions about the world (reality). Wittgenstein basically holds that the true method in philosophy would be to talk about what can be said but keep silent about what cannot be said (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 89). In this regard, I think that philosophy in Wittgenstein is a transcendental activity of talking about the world (reality) from an eternal (*sub aeternitatis*) perspective. In other words, a philosopher for Wittgenstein is not the one who describes the world (reality) as natural scientists do but he is the one who is engaged with the activity of identifying what is sayable and what is unsayable from an eternal perspective. Piergiorgio Donatelli in his article “Reshaping Ethics After Wittgenstein” describes the philosophical activity as “an activity that leads us to the world and language.” He says that philosophy is “an activity that results in our being able to go on speaking and responding to the world, in the liberation from the condition of being imprisoned in our own way of expressing ourselves” (Donatelli, 2014, p. 212). So, Donatelli suggests that philosophy is a liberating activity that frees the subject from the limitations of the propositional expression but enables him to express and understand the world (reality) from a larger perspective.

Similar to the logical form and philosophy, Wittgenstein thinks that ethics and aesthetic are transcendental forms of truth which extend beyond the boundaries of propositions.

6.41: The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: *in* it no value exists—and if it did exist, it would have no value.

6.42: So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher.

6.421: It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetic are one and the same.) (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 86).

In the above quotation, Wittgenstein puts forward that the world (reality) as the totality of states of affairs have no aesthetic or moral values and principles in itself. It is rather a body of facts (states of affairs) that occur due to a logical necessity. Denying aesthetic and ethics⁶¹ as world phenomena, Wittgenstein points out that it is impossible to formulate aesthetic and ethical propositions. In *Tractatus* he holds that one should keep silent about these concepts by saying, “*What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, s. 89). Remembering our previous discussion about the direct link between reality (world), logic and language, the inexpressibility of ethics would suggest that ethics is an unreal and meaningless phenomenon. As I have argued in the third section, this is the argument that the logical positivists have with regard to the Wittgensteinian ethics.

However, my point in this section will be in the direction that although Wittgenstein acknowledges aesthetic and ethics as unsayable in propositional sense, he does not necessarily denounce their existence and importance altogether (Burley, 2018, p. 2). On the contrary, I think Wittgenstein attributes a significant place to aesthetic and ethics in his ontology. With regard to ethics, Wittgenstein remarks that it is not part of the world but it is a

61 Because Wittgenstein says that “Ethics and aesthetic are one and the same,” I acknowledge these two concepts as similar to each other.

condition of the world: “*Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic*” (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 77). Hence, he clearly attributes a fundamental place to ethics in his ontology as the condition of the world which immediately reminds us of the logical form. Moreover, Wittgenstein argues that although there are no ethical values and principles in the world, they have a transcendental form of truth which is introduced into world through the *subject*. In *Notebooks 1914-1916* he says: “*Good and evil enter into the world through the subject. And the subject is not part of the world but a boundary of the world. It would be possible to say (à la Schopenhauer): It is not the world of Idea that is either good or evil, but the willing-subject*” (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 79). Likewise, Wittgenstein utters that the subject is “the bearer of ethics”. He says: “*If the will did not exist, neither would there be that center of the world, which we call the I, and which is the bearer of ethics. What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world. The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious*” (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 80). Hence, Wittgenstein envisages that ethics is not a world phenomenon but something that is mysteriously beyond it which is introduced into the world through the *willing-subject*. Michael Luntley in *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement* remarks that ethics in Wittgenstein is not constituted by a body of propositions about the world but it is constituted by the subject’s attitude to the world (Luntley, 2003, p. 32). He says, “*Logic and ethics do not belong to the world, they belong to the shape of our attitude to the world* (Luntley, 2003, p. 33). Also, Hans Oberdiek in his article “Wittgenstein’s Ethics” argues that in Wittgenstein the subject is not simply an empirical entity that can be studied by social and physical sciences but it is a living entity who makes a difference in the world as an ethical agent (Glock-Hyman, 2009, p. 190). Moreover, R. B. Tilghman argues that in Wittgenstein the subject introduces an ethical character into the world (Tilghman, 1991, p. 60).

In *Notebooks 1914-1916* Wittgenstein holds that the ethical and aesthetic experience of the subject is not a normal way of seeing the world (reality) but seeing it from outside. He describes this special way of seeing the world (reality) as follows: “*The work of art is the object seen sub specie aeternitatis, and the good life is the world seen sub specie aeternitatis. This is the connexion between art and ethics. The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view sub specie aeternitatis from outside. In such a way they have the whole world as background*” (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 83). Hence, Wittgenstein suggests that the aesthetic and ethical experience is a transcendental phenomenon in the sense that it is not a way of experiencing the world inside it but looking at it from the eternity. In *Tractacus* Wittgenstein reflects further on it in the following way: “6.45: *To view the world sub specie aeternie is to view it as a whole—a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical.*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 88) Wittgenstein thinks that the ethical and aesthetic experience of the world is a special way of seeing it as a whole which is mystical in itself. Roger Scruton in *Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Wittgenstein* argues that in Wittgenstein’s view the human way of seeing things is phenomenological per se. He claims that the human being has a particular form of seeing things which is different from the scientific understanding. He says: “*We explain human behaviour by giving reasons, not causes. We address ourselves to our future by making decisions, not predictions. We understand the past and present of mankind through our aims, emotions and activity, and not through predictive theories. All these distinctions seem to create the idea, if not of a specifically human world, at least of a specifically human way of seeing things... In other words, despite the attack on the method and metaphysics of phenomenology, Wittgenstein shares with the phenomenologists the sense that there is a mystery in human things that will not yield to scientific*

investigation” (Scruton, 2002, p. 278). This being so, according to Scruton Wittgenstein proposes that the subject/human being as an ethical and aesthetic entity has a phenomenological way of seeing things. In that sense, the subject for Wittgenstein is not limited to scientific understanding of the world but it is open to mysteries which can be understood through our emotions and activity. Also, R. B. Tilghim describes the subject’s special way of seeing things under the aspect of eternity (*sub aeternitatis*) as seeing the essences of things (Tilghim, 1991, p. 53). He holds that a good and ethical life can only be constructed on the basis of this special way of seeing the essences of things.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein suggests that aesthetic and ethics are not entirely inexpressible phenomena, but rather they have a particular form of expression. In *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Wittgenstein says, “*Art is a kind of expression. Good art is complete expression*” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 89). And in *Tractacus* he says, “6. 42: *So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 86). Then he adds, “6.522: *There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 89). Here Wittgenstein hints that aesthetic and ethics which are mystical and transcendental phenomena have a particular way of expressing themselves: showing/manifesting themselves. To me, manifestation of aesthetic and ethics can basically occur through an action. Likewise, in *Notebooks 1914-1916* Wittgenstein notes the following: “*This is clear: It is impossible to will without already performing the act of the will. The act of the will is not the cause of the action but is the action itself. One cannot will without acting. If the will has to have an object in the world, the object can be the intended action itself*” (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 87). Here in this quotation, Wittgenstein suggests that the willing of the subject manifests itself in action. Hence, I incline

to think that the aesthetic and ethical will of the subject can show/manifest itself through an action. Likewise, Dieter Mersch in her article “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words.” (TLP 6.522) Wittgenstein’s Ethics of Showing”, describes the Wittgensteinian ethics as a performative activity: “[*Ethics*] means the way of being as a whole and of behaving towards the whole. It therefore does not tolerate any instruction; it reaches fulfilment in doing. It is a practice: it shows itself. On that basis, the ethical has its function in the performative. Here, performance means fulfilment in life” (Arnswald, 2009, p. 44). Hence, Mersch suggests that the Wittgensteinian ethics is not consisted of a body of rules or propositions but it is a performance of a fulfilled life. In that sense, I would suggest that the Wittgensteinian ethics has a transcendental character in itself which manifests itself in a good and fulfilled life through the performance of the ethical subject.

E) Conclusion

All that said, I’ve argued in this paper that the Wittgensteinian ethics cannot be reduced to a positivistic reading which acknowledges ethics as a trivially and nonsensically metaphysical phenomenon. Rather I’ve shown my inclination to read the Wittgensteinian ethics from a non-positivistic perspective. In this regard, I’ve discussed that Wittgenstein does not necessarily denounce metaphysics altogether, but he draws a line between the realm of the scientific and expressible/sayable and the realm of metaphysics and inexpressible/unsayable. Hence, he proposes that there are some metaphysical truths which cannot be expressed in a propositional way: logical form, philosophy, aesthetic and ethics. By saying in *Tractacus* that, “*What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence*” (Wittgenstein, 1974, s. 89), he proposes that one ought to keep silent about those concepts. However, in my opinion, the inexpressibility of the metaphysical truths in Wittgenstein does not reduce them into a nonsense. On the

contrary, Wittgenstein implies that the metaphysical truths have a transcendental form of truth in themselves which disclose their meaning by showing/manifesting themselves. Accordingly, I have basically argued that in Wittgenstein ethics has a transcendental truth and meaning in itself which is manifested through the ethical subject who has a special way of seeing things under the aspect of eternity and performs ethical values in a good and fulfilled life.

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Wittgenstein's Therapeutic Aim Reconsidered

Christopher Hoyt

Western Carolina University

choyt@wcu.edu

Abstract: *I argue that Wittgenstein's grammatical method is a form of therapy intended to help us to escape the evasions of philosophical theory and to use our language honestly. Real solutions to the problems that trouble us in life are only possible if we can think about them clearly and truthfully.*

Keywords: *Wittgenstein, Cavell, therapy, confession, grammar.*

Therapeutic readings of Wittgenstein have been around at least since Stanley Cavell's essay, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," originally published in 1958. Since that time, and especially over the last two decades, therapeutic readings of Wittgenstein's later philosophy have proliferated and might even dominate scholarly opinion. However, no clear consensus has emerged as to exactly how the metaphor is to be applied. In *The Claim of Reason* (1979), Cavell argues that we yearn to be part of a community despite the skeptical worry that every mind and every meaning is ultimately an isolated ego, and he reads into Wittgenstein the project of overcoming this anxiety. Wittgenstein's grammatical studies of the criteria that justify the use of an expression are "claims to community" (p. 20), says Cavell. In *Philosophy as Therapy*, James Peterman says flatly of Cavell's reading "I do not find textual evidence for this claim" (p. 53).

Wittgenstein's real aim is to illuminate *the* ideal form of human life, Peterman argues, and his therapy is "centrally concerned with clarifying the goods embedded in the human form of life to determine how best to realize those goods..." (p. 115). Most recent interpretations, such as one developed by Phil Hutchinson, favor the much narrower claim that Wittgenstein's therapy is intended to treat "mental disturbances brought about by struggling with philosophical problems" (p. 694). Hutchinson suggests that philosophical problems are the sickly, painful symptoms of being caught in the grip of a false picture, and that Wittgenstein's aim is to liberate us to adopt a new, healthier perspective:

The philosophical therapist enters into dialogue with her interlocutor and seeks to persuade him, through the use of examples, that there are other ways to see things (for example, other ways to see "meaning"). If our interlocutor freely accepts that there are other ways to see things, then the lure and thus the thought-constraining grip of the picture are dissolved. The picture that had initially led one to the philosophical problem does so no longer. Then, and only then, has the philosophical therapist provided a presentation that is perspicuous, and it is so, potentially, on this occasion only (702).

Notice that Hutchinson's interpretation reduces philosophical problems to mere mistakes, whereas Cavell and Peterman recognize that – at least deep down – philosophical problems express deep existential worries. At first sight, Hutchinson's dismissive view of philosophical problems seems justified by Wittgenstein's famously provocative claim that his method of grammatical study has the power to dissolve philosophical problems. The point of grammatical study is to achieve "complete clarity," he writes, in which case "philosophical problems should completely disappear" (PI, §133).

However, we ought not jump to the conclusion that philosophical problems are simply annoying mistakes simply

because we can begin to clear them up by studying the grammar of problematic terms and expressions. Elsewhere, Wittgenstein makes it clear that “philosophical problems ... get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life...” (RFM ii, §23), and changing one’s thought and mode of life is a profoundly slow and difficult process – a slow and difficult process that Wittgenstein aims to go through himself through the therapeutic activity of writing. This is a point that Cavell also makes, and I want to start by reviewing his excellent insights so that I might then build on them in the latter half of my essay. I hope to show that Wittgenstein’s method is meant to help us with a wider variety of problems than those skeptical worries on which Cavell focuses.

In “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” Cavell argues that Wittgenstein’s peculiar style is explained by his unusual purpose, which was to gain self-knowledge by examining his own thoughts, and by the fact that the established philosophical forms of essay and dissertation were not up to the task (Cavell, 1976a, pp. 70). Wittgenstein recognized in himself – and, apparently, in other philosophers – a deeply rooted tendency to meet hard problems with facile answers. Writing was thus an activity of confession and self-revelation intended to expose those false answers and thereby to put the author back on course to find authentic solutions to his problems. Like Freud’s therapy, says Cavell, Wittgenstein’s writing was an activity intended to protect the writer against “understanding which is unaccompanied by inner change.” Cavell continues:

Both of them [Freud and Wittgenstein] are intent upon unmasking the defeat of our real need in the face of self-impositions which we have not assessed (§108), or fantasies (“pictures”) which we cannot escape (§115). In both, such misfortune is betrayed in the incongruence between what is said and what is meant or expressed; for both, the self is

concealed in assertion and action and revealed in temptation and wish. (p. 72)

By reconnecting “what is said and what is meant” – that is, by helping us speak honestly about the matters that trouble us – Freud and Wittgenstein help us avoid phony solutions to our problems so that we might go on to find some that are real. Our words must remain grounded in the reality of our lives if they are to help us achieve the sort of real understanding that is accompanied by deep change, but all too often, philosophy descends into the sort of disconnected word-play that is the favored means by which intellectuals escape the complexities and difficulties of reality, especially the reality of their own inner lives. Wittgenstein famously says that “philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday” (PI, §38) and that his own method is intended to “bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI, §116). When we take language on holiday, we cannot use it to speak or to think honestly about ourselves or our problems. Wittgenstein’s seemingly obsessive work on grammar was fundamentally an act to save himself from the neurotic distractions and bad faith of misguided philosophy.

The idea that a lot of philosophizing is only so much avoidance behavior isn’t new or unique to Wittgenstein. Although he wrote about them in slightly different terms, Freud effectively invented the modern concepts of rationalization and intellectualization (Zepf, 2011), a fact that might help explain why Wittgenstein once described himself as a “disciple of Freud” (LC, p. 41). The psychoanalyst Rollo May says that “the particular form of resistance generally used by intellectuals in psychotherapy is to make an abstract or a logical principle out of the problem,” a path that inevitably leads to suffering. “The more a person lacks self-awareness,” says May, “the more he is prey to anxiety and irrational anger and resentment.” (May, 1981, pp. 190-91). Like Freud, Wittgenstein recognizes that the real enemy of a peaceful

mind is the self-deception we use to bury the problems that trouble us. “Nothing is so difficult as not deceiving yourself,” Wittgenstein says flatly in *Culture and Value* (p. 39), and one function of his philosophy was clearly confession, and long exercise in trying to avoid bad faith and the suffering it brings. “Thoughts at peace,” Wittgenstein writes. “That is the goal someone who philosophizes longs for” (CV, p. 58). To find peace, it will not do to simply dismiss philosophical questions as mistakes. To find peace, we must escape the distractions of ill-conceived philosophy and face the issues that brought those questions to light.

Wittgenstein’s grammatical investigations are nothing less than an effort to study the problems of life that give rise to philosophical musings *in situ*, so to speak, they are a hunt for the things we can rightly say about these problematic aspects of life before we get lost in theory. “The profoundest as well as the most superficial questions can be understood only when they have been placed in their natural environment,” says Cavell (1976a, p. 41). When we read philosophy that loses sight of the puzzling features of our experience that brought our philosophical questions to life, Cavell continues, we may “feel instead of thoughtful advice we have been handed a form letter” (p. 41). This is what happens when we “take language on holiday.”

Cavell focuses on skepticism in its many guises, and he constantly reads into Wittgenstein an acknowledgment of the valid existential worries that underlie the skeptic’s philosophical questions and theories. Cavell says of the skeptic worried about the problem of other minds, for example, that he is really worried about the extent and the conditions of his moral responsibility to respond to the needs of others (Cavell, 1981b). I see Wittgenstein’s confessional method as applicable to a far wider range of philosophical problems that arise for most of us in life. Despite that Wittgenstein wrote very little about the concept of love, it strikes me as a good one to illustrate his therapeutic method.

The philosophical question, “What is love?,” appeals to just about everyone at some point in life, but especially at moments when something has gone awry: when you are falling in love but doubt your choice, when you are falling out of love and suffering regret, when events compel you to admit that your friendships are unfulfilling, and so on. In passages such as these, we want clear answers to personal questions: Is this love, or am I fooling myself? Wittgenstein himself documented a moment like this in a 1937 entry in the *Nachlass*:

Think of my former love, or infatuation, in Marguerite and my love for Francis Skinner. It is a bad sign for me that my feelings for Marguerite could cool so completely! Of course, there is a difference here; but my heart is cold. May I be forgiven ... may it be possible for me to be sincere and loving (1 Dec, 1937, 120:26v).⁶²

Wittgenstein now acknowledges his former self-deception, a lack of authenticity that is shameful to him and which raises, in his mind, the worry that he may not be someone who is able to love at all. In such a mood, a man might ask, “What is love?” and hope to answer in some way that would assuage his guilt or to at least give him clear answers about his past feelings and his future prospects. Notice that the question is nearly identical to the one Wittgenstein famously quotes in PI §89, “What is time?” That question lures Augustine into the “darkness” of metaphysical speculation, according to Wittgenstein, a darkness that also threatens to swallow the poor wretch who would try to sort out his love life by coming up with a theory of love’s essential nature to serve as a measuring stick.

62 “Denke an meine frühere Liebe, oder Verliebtheit, in Marguerite Respinger und an meine Liebe für Francis Skinner. Es ist ein schlimmes Zeichen für mich daß meine Gefühle für Marguerite Respinger so gänzlich erkalten konnten! Freilich ist hier ein Unterschied; aber meine Herzenskälte besteht. Möge mir vergeben werden; d.h. aber: möge es mir möglich sein, aufrichtig und liebevoll zu sein” (1 Dec, 1937, 120:26v). My translation.

To face the problems in our lives that brought questions about the nature of love into being, we must continue to use the word “love” naturally, we must continue speaking about our lives if we are to say anything helpful. Our everyday words and our lives are inevitably far more complicated than our theories would suggest. Compare Wittgenstein’s well-known comment about the grammar of the word “thinking”: “‘Thinking’, a widely ramified concept. A concept that comprises many manifestations of life. The phenomena of thinking are widely scattered” he writes (PI, §111). “And the naïve idea that one forms of it does not correspond to reality at all. We expect a smooth contour and what we get to see is ragged. Here it might really be said that we have constructed a false picture” (PI, §112). In contrast to the false picture, the real concept “seems like something muddled ... In the actual use of expressions we make detours, we go by side-roads” (PI, §426). When we are puzzled about the nature of thought or love, we must avoid the temptation to speculate and instead turn to the facts that brought our questions into being in the first place. “Grief describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life” (PI ii, p. 174), says Wittgenstein, a statement at least equally true about love. People love spouses they fight with and cousins they haven’t seen in years. For happy newlyweds, “love” and “lust” needn’t be sorted out, but an old couple might need to make a clearer distinction. And so on. You can’t possibly understand love if you take the word “love” on a holiday somewhere that makes it look neat and tidy. You’ll almost inevitably come back from your journey and insist that all these cases *must* have something in common, or you might insist that there are really four kinds of love, or six, or some other nonsense. “Don’t say: ‘There must be something common, or they would not be called ‘[love]’” (PI, §66) but instead look and see the real patterns.

If you want to figure out whether or not you love someone,

the only honest method takes you headlong into the messy, painful domains that brought your question to mind in the first place. You must look at the thoughts the course through your head, at your dreams, at your choices, at your fears, at your mood. Wittgenstein hints at what an honest investigation of love would look like when begins to limn a real case of introspection:

It makes sense to ask: „Do I really love her, or am I only pretending to myself?“ and the process of introspection is the calling up of memories; of imagined possible situations, and of the feelings that one would have if.... (PI, §587).

The list of mental exercises that the troubled lover might try is very long indeed. One could spend months or years in psychotherapy trying to reach an honest answer, and most of us have sat through many hours of conversations with friends in romantic limbo. To sort out your questions about love, there is no serviceable path that is short, certain, or easy. It is the nature of the problem that it can only be addressed by following many threads, seeing many sides, and facing the hard reality that many questions end in uncertainty. But notice that the unhappy lover's questions are likely to fade from his mind as he puts his love life in order. If he succeeds, the nature of love won't be revealed to him through theory but through the reality of his life. The troubled lover will find peace when she lives in a manner that agrees with her thoughts and feelings, and she can only achieve that if she is honest with herself. "The solution of the problem you see in life is a way of living which makes what is problematic disappear" (CV, p. 31), Wittgenstein writes elsewhere. Someone who asks the philosophical question "What is love?" may well have deep personal needs she hopes to meet, but the question invites a sort of philosophical speculation that won't help much, and one that will likely be a distraction and a hindrance.

Wittgenstein didn't spend much time pondering the nature of love, but his copious writings on the philosophy of psychology

repeatedly cover concepts that we know were relevant to problematic dimensions of his life: grief, hope, shame, joy, sorry, happiness, vanity, and more. Witness a few of Wittgenstein's remarks about the challenge of knowing one's own motives. "Understanding oneself properly is difficult," he writes, "because an action to which one *might* be prompted by good, generous motives is something one may also be doing out of cowardice or indifference" (CV, p. 48). Did you buy your lover dinner to show support while he was writing his book? Or was it with the hope of guaranteeing his affection? Or was it because you wanted to lure him away from his work so you wouldn't have to eat alone? In the following passage from *The Big Typescript*, Wittgenstein reminds us of the messy reality of trying to get clear about your own motives in a moment such as this:

"How do you know that you did it from this motive?" – "I remember having done it for that reason." – "What are you remembering? – Did you say that to yourself then; or do you remember the mood you were in; or that you had trouble suppressing an expression of your feeling?" These things will show what having done it from this motive consisted in.

And if perhaps you suppressed an expression of your feeling only with difficulty – how did you do that? Did you at that time utter the expression softly to yourself? etc., etc.

A motive is not a cause "seen from within"! Here the simile of "inside and outside" is totally misleading – as it so often is. – It is taken from the idea of the soul (of a living being) in one's head (imagined as a hollow space) (TS, pp. 401-02).

Our inner lives are as "muddy" and filled with "detours" as the concepts we use to describe them, and getting to the bottom of things is inevitably a hard slog.

Notice that the preceding remark closes with a comment about the inner/outer picture, which is one of the central targets

of Wittgenstein's remarks on psychology and, indeed, of his later philosophy. Of all the philosophical mistakes that Wittgenstein hopes to unearth and to undo, the tacit assumption that the mind is an interior realm of processes is clearly one of the most difficult and one of the most important. It is not only Descartes who would be undermined by Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology, so too would much of cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Yet in the passage cited, Wittgenstein is worried about how the inner/outer picture scuttles the effort to know one's own motives. The fiction that the mind is something interior and private is "totally misleading," he says, and a hindrance to confession. Psychological theories that treat motives as interior processes, as forms of psychical energy and the like, only blind us to the reality that the concept of *motive* picks out terrifically complex patterns in the weave of life. "Don't see it as simply a matter of course that man has motives, (or) says things because of motives," Wittgenstein writes elsewhere, "These phenomena constitute the mental (spiritual) life of man."⁶³ The phenomena of *motive* and *confession* are terrifically complicated, subtle and profoundly important:

But is it not peculiar that there is such a thing as this reaction, this confession of intention? Is it not an extremely remarkable instrument of language? What is really remarkable about it? Well--it is difficult to imagine how a human being learns this use of words. It is so very subtle (Z, §39).

Were an intention just a particular class of private mental phenomena, then "confessing an intention" would really be more or less the same thing as reporting an observation; "I saw this

63 „Die natürlichen Äußerungen der Scham, wenn man gelogen hat, sind das Äquivalent der Worte „Ich habe gelogen“. Es ist hier eben eine eigentümliche Reaktion. Sieh's nicht als selbstverständlich an, daß der Mensch Motive hat, etwas aus einem Motiv sagt. Diese Phänomene machen das geistige «seelische» Leben des Menschen.“ (Nachlass 134:79.. Feb-Jun 1947) My translation with assistance from Dr. William Lehman.

thing inside myself,” or “I saw this thing inside myself and lied to you about it in the past.” But confessing an intention is nothing like that. If you examine yourself and realize that you invited your lover to dinner in an effort to guarantee her love, you might feel the need to confess your selfish intention. Understanding the messiness of what *intentions* are, which one must do in order to understand the meaning of a *confession*, is a complicated but subtle thing to do. You can only see the remarkable pattern of “confessing a motive” if you speak as a participant, as one who uses words like “confess” and “motive” with their everyday meanings. It takes a delicate understanding to appreciate the fact that “a false confession is not necessarily deception” (RPPii, §692), for example, to see that there are layers of the self to peel, to examine, to acknowledge. Elsewhere, Wittgenstein reminds us that:

The criteria for the ‘truthful’ confession that I thought such-and-such are not the criteria for the description of a past process. And the importance of the truthful confession does not reside in its rendering some process correctly and certainly. It resides rather in the special indications of subjective truth and in the special consequences of the truthful confession. (LWi, §897)

To master the concept of a “truthful confession” requires someone to grasp the nuances of human life and gesture, those “special indications of subjective truth” that are part of the phenomena of confessing. Someone who is puzzled about the confessions of a president, a lover, or herself is almost certainly puzzled about those gestures, or about some “special consequences” of confession, and a facile definition or a theory of the hidden mental accompaniments of honest confession will only burry those questions deeper.

When we fall prey to the temptation of taking the word “intention” on holiday, when we imagine that it names some

specific mental phenomenon or process in the private, inner realm of the mind, we remove ourselves from life and forfeit the chance to understand ourselves. When it comes to understanding our motives, our grief, our love, the picture of the mind as an interior realm of observable facts does enormous harm. Wittgenstein writes:

To say that thinking is an activity of mind, as writing an activity of the hand, is a travesty of truth. (Love in the heart. Head and heart as places in the soul.) (Nachlass, 114:91-92 5 Jun, 1932)⁶⁴

Thinking and love are not interior processes gazed upon with an inner eye. They are complex and subtle dimensions of life, and we can only get to know our own thoughts and our own experiences of love if we acknowledge their real natures. “Thinking” is a “widely ramified concept” (RPPii, §218), Wittgenstein says elsewhere, it is a concept that deals with many complex and subtle dimensions of life.

Questions about the nature of love and the nature of intention are gripping because they deal with such complicated and important features of human life, but those questions are most gripping when something is amiss, such as when our love is faltering. In such moments as these, philosophical theories (and psychological theories) nearly always impede rather than aid in our understanding. Wittgenstein writes:

The solution of the problem you see in life is a way of living which makes what is problematic disappear. ... But don't we have the feeling that someone who doesn't see a problem there is blind to something important, indeed to what is most important of all? Wouldn't I like to say he is living aimlessly... Or shouldn't I say: someone who lives rightly does

64 “Zu sagen: Denken sei eine Tätigkeit des Geistes, wie Schreiben eine Tätigkeit der Hand, ist eine Travestie der Wahrheit.(Die Liebe im Herzen. Kopf und Herz als Örtlichkeiten der Seele.)” (114:91-92 5 Jun, 1932)

not experience the problem as sorrow, hence not after all as a problem, but rather as joy, that is so to speak as a bright halo round his life, not a murky background. (CV, p. 31)

Wittgenstein's philosophical writing is an exercise in confession, an attempt to avoid the evasions of conventional philosophy, to face life squarely on, and to live in a manner that transforms puzzles about love and intention into a joy. "A confession has to be part of one's new life" (CV, p. 16), says Wittgenstein elsewhere, it must be part of a change – hopefully towards a life of joy. Confession is a therapeutic act that Wittgenstein repeats over and over again in the course of his wide-ranging grammatical studies. His copious, obsessive writing is a document of his tortured efforts to know his thoughts and his heart truly, and recreate himself and his outlook in the form of a happy man.

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Tolstoy's Religious Influence on Young Wittgenstein

Kamen Lozev

South-West University 'Neofit Rilski', Blagoevgrad

kamenlozev@swu.bg

Abstract: *The paper is an attempt to explain the tremendous influence which Tolstoy's Gospel in Brief had on young Wittgenstein. Factors enabling the 'religious conversion' of Wittgenstein are investigated together with the Tolstoyan themes discussed in the Notebooks, 1914-16, and the ethico-religious final part of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.*

Key words: *Tolstoy, young Wittgenstein, Gospel in Brief, rationality, religion.*

... and that he [Wittgenstein] was above all a person
in search of spiritual salvation.
Fania Pascal (Pascal 1984: 44)

When young Wittgenstein, aged 25, serving as an ordinary soldier in the Austrian-Hungarian imperial army on the war ship *Goplana* in Galicia, bought Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief* and read it for the first time, he was stunned and gripped by the feeling of the book's existential importance for him. In 1919 in the Hague at the meeting with Russell he must have so eloquently conveyed the influence Tolstoy had on him during the war years that Russell could not help retelling the whole story in a letter to his ex-mistress Ottoline Morrell:

"... during the war a curious thing happened. He went on

duty to the town of Turnov in Galicia, and happened to come upon a bookshop which however seemed to contain nothing but picture postcards. However, he went inside and found that it contained just one book: Tolstoy on The Gospels. He bought it merely because there was no other. He read it and re-read it, and thenceforth had it always with him, under fire and at all times.” (Bertrand Russell to Lady Ottoline, December 20, 1919)

According to Klagge Wittgenstein’s ‘near-obsession’ with Tolstoy’s book during his wartime service is well documented. (Klagge 2011: 10) He read the book in the first week of September and ever since always had it at his side; wfor him the book became a “talisman” which protected his life. His fellow soldiers nicknamed him “the one with the Gospel.”

Wittgenstein left another strong evidence of the huge influence of Tolstoy’s Gospel on him. A year later in July 1915 he received a letter from Ludwig von Ficker, one of the prospect publishers of the *Tractatus*, in which Ficker was expressing doubts that he would hardly survive under the hardships at the front. In his reply Wittgenstein advised him to read Tolstoy’s *Gospel in Brief* adding that at the time “this book virtually kept me alive.” These words we have to take *literally*: Wittgenstein truly believed that the book could ‘save lives’, and not only his but Ficker’s too. And the salvation is contained in the solution Tolstoy offered to the universal existential problem of how to live.

Tosloy’s influence can hardly be overstated. It came in the right time and under the right circumstances to *save* the life of the future author of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Not only that: Tolstoy is in complete agreement with what von Wright remarked about young Wittgenstein: Ludwig was most influenced not so much by philosophers per se but by writers, religious writers included, and poets who had broader approach to life and valued language. Tolstoy was definitely among them and no doubt contributed to Wittgenstein’s masterly style of writing which

made von Wright state: ‘It would be surprising if he were not one day ranked among the classic writers of German prose.’ (von Wright 2018: 9)

The unusual praise of *The Gospel in Brief* on the part of Wittgenstein by itself calls for broader investigation of this extraordinary influence on the author of one of the most amazing philosophical works ever produced.

In the pages below I shall present a short account of the roots and overall effect which Tolstoy’s *Gospel in Brief* had on young Wittgenstein. Tolstoy’s ideas can be sensed in the final part of the *Tractatus* and in the pages of Wittgenstein’s *Notebooks* during WWI. In accordance with the focus of the paper I shall first give *my picture* of the mental and emotional state of young Wittgenstein at the time he bought and read Tolstoy’s book; then I shall offer a description of several aspects of the book which influenced young Ludwig the most, and shall try to detect their traces in the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus*.

1

Why did Tolstoy’s *Gospel in Brief* so significantly influence Wittgenstein?

To get a somewhat *immediate* answer one has to be clear about the mental and emotional state of Wittgenstein around August – September 1914. This is key to understanding deeply (and *better*) Tolstoy’s influence. It is also important to consider Wittgenstein’s attitude to religion and see how it changed from the time of his childhood until September 1914. This attitude was indeed controversial and ‘evolutionary’ but very indicative of the spiritual pursuits of young Wittgenstein.

Being the youngest son of Karl Wittgenstein, the richest steel and iron tycoon of the Austro-Hungarian empire, hardly presupposes that in your family atmosphere *religion* will be given ‘pride of place’, to use Frege’s famous expression. It was indeed

art, mainly music, that dominated the lively atmosphere of the Wittgensteins in their Viennese *palais*. As a practical man, aiming at the better integration of his family into the Viennese elite, Karl in compliance with his father's move was known to belong to Protestantism, while his wife was Catholic. (Ludwig Wittgenstein was baptized in the Catholic Church (Von Wright 2018: 4). During his service in the Great War he always declared his faith to be Catholic and was given a Catholic burial in Cambridge in April 1951.)

The air in the house, however, was also permeated by Karl's relentless desire to educate his sons in engineering and management sciences so that one day he could hand over to them all burdens of the industrial empire he successfully built within some fifteen years (Monk 1991, ch. I; Lozev 2019: 28). This second aspect of the family atmosphere proved to be fatal for two of Ludwig's elder brothers: they could not withstand their father's will and so, left with no other choice, decided to commit suicide. The family did their best to overcome and conceal both tragedies but Ludwig was old enough to have sensed the depth of what had happened.

Did he turn to religion for support and consolation? This we do not know for sure. However: which religion was 'his'? Ray Monk describes an interesting episode from the family folklore when uncle Louis, Karl's brother, tells Ludwig's sisters that they are Jewish *pur sang* (which they never fully believed until March 1938 when they had to face the provisions of the Nuremberg racial laws of 1935 (McGuinness 2018: 346)). The second suicide happened at a time when Ludwig was a schoolboy in Linz where his father had sent him to finish high school. It is known that in those years, following conversations (or rather *confessions* he made) with his sisters Mining (Hermine) and Gretl (Margarete), Ludwig ascertained the fact that he had lost his religious faith (Kanterian 2007: 20, Monk, ch. I).

What we also know, however, and what Wittgenstein's biographers with curiosity emphasize, is that in the Realschule of Linz Ludwig did not do well on the serious subjects but had the highest marks in Religion. Did this fact had anything to do with the suicide of his brothers? Such questions now can be left only to guesses. What is unquestionable, however, is that young Ludwig obviously took interest in religious topics.

*

Some of the years before the 'apprenticeship with Russell' (Gregory Landini) Wittgenstein considered as 'wasted time'. His concentration on Aeronautics and Engineering studies had taken such hold of him that for a while he completely turned his back on his personal spiritual development. The studies under Russell seem to have strengthened this tendency: now *logic* became his absolute obsession and master. Wittgenstein excelled in this field with all might of his youth and intellectual powers. But he excelled in something else too: Bertrand Russell, then the famous Cambridge don, never hid his outright aversion to religion and at first 'the young successor of his mantel' strictly followed in his footsteps. An interesting episode, conveyed in a letter Russell wrote to his mistress at the time Ottoline Morrell, speaks by itself: 'He [Wittgenstein] is far more terrible with Christians than I am. He had liked Farmer, the undergraduate monk, and was horrified to learn that he is a monk. Farmer came to tea with him, and Wittgenstein at once attacked him – as I imagine with absolute fury.' (BR to OM, 1912, March) (Griffin 2002: 405).

The studies in logic and philosophy were hard and Wittgenstein, being a typical Wittgenstein and still under the spell of Weininger¹, worked incessantly on the problems which according to Russell might drive one crazy. The strain, unfortunately, both intellectual and physical drove young Wittgenstein to the abyss of suicide. Russell, judging probably from his own experience,

feared it the most.

In these days it was him, assisted occasionally by Ottoline Morrell, who literally saved Ludwig from madness. Fearing the worst from his devoted *apprentice* Russell did all within his power to protect him from going to the extremes. He stayed with his student late at night sharing with him the silence (sometimes for hours) or discussing logic and Wittgenstein's sins. (Russell 2000, ch. 9).

The intellectual strains badly affected Wittgenstein's nervous system and there appeared the awful fits of deep depression. Ludwig was raised as a very sensitive child and it now showed itself in its worst form. (The unusual sensitivity had always been substantial integral part of Wittgenstein's character. It is interesting to read how Carnap describes the efforts of Schlick to emphasize this aspect, in Carnap's words 'the hypersensitive and easily irritated'² Wittgenstein, and how he instructs the members of the Vienna circle whom Wittgenstein chose to meet with that they 'should not interrupt him and not insist on giving answers or oppose his opinion' (Carnap 1999: 52).)

*

The vacations between Cambridge semesters were for Wittgenstein true salvation. He would always spend them with his family in Vienna or in their country house. It is interesting that in 1912, while in Vienna, watching a mediocre theater play Wittgenstein expressed an interesting thought. The play, he said, had allowed him to see a *possibility for religion*. In his words, it is the feeling of 'absolute safety' which is in the basis of religion. Years later, in 1929, he would discuss and develop this thesis in his famous *Lecture on Ethics* but it is obvious that in his mind he bore the thesis for a long time and thoroughly thought it through. What is also obvious, however, is that now, in 1912, he was desperately longing for the feeling of absolute safety.

Related to our topic of religion are other interesting developments taking place in 1912. It was Russell himself who recommended to Wittgenstein to read William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The book immediately took hold of the student and Russell soon received his letter from Vienna (22.6.1912): 'This book does me a *lot* of good. ... but I am not sure that it does not improve me a little in a way in which I would like to improve *very much*', wrote Wittgenstein. (quoted in McGuinness 2008: 30) The letter reveals how much Wittgenstein hoped for a change.

At that time, and also in Vienna, prompted by 'the intellectual of the family' Gretl, Wittgenstein began reading the German translations of Kierkegaard which first appeared in Karl Kraus' journal *Die Fackel*. (cf. Schoenbaumfeld 2013)

Reading James and Kierkegaard proved of crucial importance: we shall hardly over-exaggerate if we say that these two writers, and Tolstoy in 1914, induced young Wittgenstein to turn his eyes on himself, to scrutinize his own life and the way he was living and perhaps 'sinning'. All this led him to realize the need of *self-transformation*, of becoming 'a good person'.

From this time on Wittgenstein's attitude to religion, ethical principles and values changed. What followed in 1913 was the tragic but resolute breaking up with Russell, the mentor he admired just a year ago. Wittgenstein was undergoing a painful re-invention of himself, he wanted to reject all connections with his past and start a new life as a new person. The secluded life he led in Norway was devoted to solving the difficult problems of logic but he was also constantly and very intensely reflecting on his inner life expecting a change to happen but never knowing which side it would come from.

Up to the moment of his voluntary enrolment in the Imperial army young Ludwig was eager to transform himself, not much aware that the very expectation of the transformation *was*

transforming him. His sisters were feeling the intensity of his inner struggles: Wittgenstein, Hermine wrote, ‘had the intense wish to assume some heavy burden and to perform some task other than purely intellectual work’ (quoted in Kanterian 2007: 62).

There is undoubted truth in McGuinness’ interpretation of young Ludwig’s motives to enlist in the army. Patriotism? Yes, but not only: in the thrill of being a soldier and fight for his country he saw the possibility of self-transformation come true. However, the very first days spent within the environment of his future soldier comrades led him to total and bitter disillusionment reflected in his diaries.

2

I always carry Tolstoy’s ‘Statements of the Gospel’
around with me like a talisman.

Wittgenstein, Diary, 12 Sept 1914

Wittgenstein’s wartime diaries recorded that he read Tolstoy’s *Gospel in Brief* in the beginning of September 1914. The book immediately arrested his attention and made him constantly read it. To quote again Russell’s (though these were obviously Wittgenstein’s) words: ‘He read it and re-read it, and thenceforth had it always with him, under fire and at all times.’ (see above)

Wittgenstein scholars pay close attention to the overwhelming Tolstoyan force of influence when they analyze *the second, and more important part* of the Tractatus (‘that I have *not* written’, as Wittgenstein declared), its *ethical point*, as so described in the second famous letter of Wittgenstein to von Ficker in 1919 (cf. Ware 2011: 596).

Many different factors were at play which could account for Tolstoy’s influence on Wittgenstein, but we shall focus only on some of them.

*

Throughout this year, when almost every minute I was asking myself should I take my life with a loop or a bullet, all this time, along with those thoughts and observations that I spoke of, my heart was languishing with a painful feeling. This feeling I can call no other than the search for God.

Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession*

The 50th anniversary is a special age in the life of every person, a substantive reminder that life has an end.

Abdusalam Guseynov (Guseynov 2008: 802)

First and foremost, Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief*, captivated young Ludwig with the irresistible feeling that the author is a *kindred soul*. This feeling became a conviction which must have seized Wittgenstein instantly upon reading the pages of the Preface³. As Tolstoy himself explains in the Preface the book itself is a kind of 'extraction' of a huge manuscript. Tolstoy's intention must have been to 'To retell the evangelical texts in the most simple, people's language... so that it should primarily be understandable to the working Russian people.' (Gusev 1957a: 974). For the first time the book was published in England in 1885, and its first publication in Russia was in 1906. However, it circulated underground in manuscript form and as lithographs and became known as the *New Gospel* or *Tolstoy's Gospel*. (Gusev 1957b: 1002)

In the Preface of his *Gospel in Brief* Tolstoy summarizes some of the ideas in his previous works *A Confession* and *The Four Gospels Harmonized (United) and Translated*. In 1914 Wittgenstein surely knew who Tolstoy was. In his school years he was more or less acquainted with his great novels and perhaps knew about Tolstoy's religious torments and painful search for the *meaning of life* in his last three decades, which led in the end to

his excommunication from the official Russian Orthodox Church. When this happened in 1901, it was an instant international news: the Wittgensteins surely heard it and perhaps discussed it in the family. (Hermine, at least, had hardly missed it.) The religious writings of Tolstoy, the great Russian writer (even in his lifetime proclaimed by some critics as *the greatest novelist*), were also translated and, though not so popular as his novels and stories, were well in circulation. (This should make us cautious about the way Russell related to Ottoline the story of Wittgenstein's purchase of Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief* in Tarnow as somewhat accidental and fateful event during his military service.)

Reading Tolstoy's book gave Wittgenstein a vivid picture of the author's deepest doubts and fears, of his paradoxes and frequent bouts to kill himself (which Ludwig very well knew from his own experience in his previous civil life), of Tolstoy's despair 'in the abyss', alone with the *cursed questions* of how to continue living when everything is so meaningless and impossible to bear.

Reading *the religious* Tolstoy at the front was for young Ludwig like conversing with him on the most important issues of life and death. It was as if Tolstoy was assuring him that he knew how he, private soldier Wittgenstein of the Imperial army, must be feeling. It was as if Tolstoy was saying: yes, when I was your age I was really a bad man, much worse than you feel yourself to be, and "I cannot think of those years without horror, loathing and heartache. I killed men in war and challenged men to duels in order to kill them... Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder -- there was no crime I did not commit... So I lived for ten years." (Tolstoy 2018: 36) I was then blind, Tolstoy continued, to *the important questions* which torture you now. They came to me at the age of fifty... You speak of being lonely, wretched and ostracized by your fellow soldiers, 'this pack of rogues', as you call them in your diary, 'rude and coarse', 'stupid', 'wicked' and audacious (cf. Kanterian 2007, ch.

3), but my situation was more terrible than yours since I was lost and lonely *amidst my own family*, the people I loved and the people who loved me but never understood me. At the age of fifty, twice your age now, this started my inner transformation, my ‘second birth’, my *return to Christianity*, the way I now understand it - with all impossible struggles, ultimate unhappiness, frustration and disgust on the part of my wife and some of my children together with friends from my closest circle... Yes, my younger friend, we are *kindred souls* and we are both in transition, but you should never even hope of coming to an end or finding peace and calm... ‘Since calm is spiritual meanness.’ (quoted in Tolstoy 2018: 1104).

*

A magnificent work. But it’s not what I expected.
Ludwig Wittgenstein, Diary, 2 Sept. 1914

Wittgenstein’s *Geheime Tagebuecher* (secret notebooks) reveal that at first Tolstoy’s *Gospel in Brief* surprised him. The book turned out to be something ‘not expected’: the word ‘Gospel’ in the title suggested a strictly religious text but instead what he began to read was a kind of ‘rationalized fusion’ of the four Gospels which Tolstoy was interpreting from the perspective of his own view of Christianity as being not so much a *religion* and *divine revelation* but a *teaching*, a teaching *not* of the God but of a great *man*. Comprehending the true nature of Tolstoy’s book must have thrilled young Wittgenstein and he must have quickly read and reread the book to the extent to write down in his diaries passages of it by heart: he often used to repeat to himself that man is weak in his flesh but free in his Spirit.

Young Wittgenstein was both surprised and attracted by the book. The feeling that Tolstoy is a *kindred soul* was the first aspect of the book which quickly took hold of him but the further he read

and re-read the book the more he was taken by its *rationality*. Yes, *Tolstoy's Gospel* was an attempt to set forth Christianity as a purely rational comprehensive system. This fascinated and most impressed Wittgenstein. The rationality went hand in hand with the *critical spirit* of the book and they both comprised its *second* most appealing and impressive feature.

There is a clear analogy between Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief* and the *Tractatus* with respect to the *structure* of both books. Like the Preface of Tolstoy's *Gospel* which is the most substantial and influential part of the book where the main ideas are laid down, Wittgenstein wrote his Preface with similar intention. Both Prefaces claim to contain the truth, unassailable and final, the *solution* of the crucial problem which had driven both authors to write the books. These solutions were so important that radical changes in the lives of the authors were brought about: Tolstoy was 'reborn' and started to live observing the 'true' teaching of Jesus ('distilled' after six years of investigation and translation from Koine Greek and Hebrew of the original manuscripts of the Gospels and the other Christian sacred texts) while Wittgenstein gave up philosophy believing that his 'solution' put an effective full stop to it, and became a primary teacher in several rural villages of the Austrian Alps.

There is another analogy concerning the chapters of both books. Tolstoy begins each chapter by explaining it in his own words, making it absolutely clear how he understands the text related to the corresponding aspect of Jesus's teaching. In his *Tractatus* Wittgenstein did the same: although he was very sparing of words, his seven 'chapters' began in fact with a general short statement, elucidated as the text proceeds by more concrete and specifically numbered statements. (In his later years he made the well-known remark that in fact all statements of the *Tractatus* sounded like chapter titles.)

It is also interesting to note that in the Preface of his *Tractatus*

Wittgenstein emphasized that the value of the book consists in the fact that it contained thoughts: in this we can ‘hear’ an echo of Tolstoy’s rationality and Tolstoy’s belief that in matters of the Christian teaching (and more broadly – in matters of faith) we are bound to apply reason, arguments and common sense. It is well known that the *Tractatus* contains a strong element of mysticism (Russell) and in this Wittgenstein can well be likened to Kostja Levin, the famous character in *Anna Karenina* (and no doubt a self-depiction of Leo Tolstoy himself), whose soul in the last part of the novel underwent the anguish of the everlasting struggle between rational knowledge and religious (Christian) faith.

*

Но тогава защо не вярва? Сигурно защото много мисли.
(But why does he not believe then? May be because he
thinks too much.)

Levin/Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, part 8, ch 17

From its outset Tolstoy’s project of translating and fusing (harmonizing) of the four Gospels was a *rational effort*. In fact it started as a result of his aversion for what was then being preached inside the Russian churches. In 1877 Tolstoy’s ‘religious awakening’, or ‘second birth’, first led him to embrace Christianity as a source, or rather a ‘way’, of finding the true meaning of life. Tolstoy wholeheartedly embraced the official Church doctrine but the utter disappointment came very soon (according to Gusev this happened in 1878). At the end of 1878 he finally imposed on himself the task to go back to the original Gospels and through to re-examining and re-translating them to find out the ‘true meaning’ of Christ’s teaching.

The rationality of Tolstoy’s *re-construction* of the Gospels can best be seen in the fact that in his translations/interpretations he bluntly rejected all irrational Gospel verses, all miracles and

episodes contradicting common sense. Tolstoy writes that he had excluded the following verses: ‘the conception and birth of John the Baptist, his imprisonment and death, the birth of Jesus, his genealogy, his mother’s flight with him to Egypt; his miracles at Cana and Capernaum; the casting out of the devils; the walking on the sea; the blasting of the fig-tree; the healing of the sick; the raising of the dead; the resurrection of Christ himself, and the references to prophecies fulfilled by his life.’ (Tolstoy 1957: 802-3; Tolstoy 1896/1943: 5)

Emblematic for the rational approach of Tolstoy is also the way he translated the Greek word *logos* in the Gospel of John. This central term Tolstoy translated into Russian not as ‘слово’ (word) but as ‘разумение жизни’ (understanding of life, knowledge of life, both available in the English translations of Tolstoy). Wittgenstein was perhaps surprised at first but reading and re-reading the book he must have found the expression concurring with the overall spirit of Tolstoy’s interpretation of Christ’s teaching.

It hardly surprised any reader of *The Gospel in Brief* that the official Orthodox Russian Church ex-communicated Tolstoy and never pardoned him even after his death. (Today Tolstoy is still held responsible for his ‘extremist Weltanschauung’ and for ‘having inflamed religious animosity and hate within the meaning of Article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation’.)

Tolstoy clearly foresaw what is in store for him after his well-grounded criticism of the official Orthodox Church doctrine. At the end of the Preface of his Gospel he writes: ‘For such readers there are only two ways out: humble confession and renunciation of their lies, or a persecution of those who expose them for what they have done and are still doing.

If they will not disavow their lies, only one thing remains for them: to persecute me-for which I, completing what I have written, prepare myself with joy and with fear of my own weakness.’

(Tolstoy 1957: 814; Tolstoi 1896/1943: 21-22)

This powerful statement of Tolstoy no doubt appealed to Wittgenstein. His *Geheime Tagebuecher* give abundant evidence of how often he prayed to God to give him strength and courage. Like Tolstoy he prayed to God not to save his life but to save his soul and in the brave hour he hoped that God would be with him. Young Ludwig was obviously in constant preparation to meeting with death and this was the decisive factor which turned him into a religious man.

*

„Какво съм аз и де съм, и защо съм тук?“

„...Освободих се от лъжата, познах господаря.“

(“What am I, and where am I, and why am I here?”

“... I rid myself of the lie, I came to know the Lord.”)

Levin/Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, part 8, ch 19

Perhaps the most powerful influence which Tolstoy's Gospel exerted on young Wittgenstein came from the fact that the small book contained a 'solution'. For Wittgenstein it was *the solution* of the questions how should I live in the right way and what is the meaning of my life (in Levin's words 'Why am I here?'). This third, and most important, aspect of the influence of *The Gospel in Brief* on young Wittgenstein was the *most needed* one and he unequivocally got the message which Tolstoy, this *lost soul*, this *man in transition*, was sending to him. Tolstoy was saying that he finally found the solution of the fateful existential questions asked by Wittgenstein. This solution, Tolstoy (and Levin) explained, is grounded on observations of the life ordinary people live: they live happily, they live in the right way because they observe the teaching of Christ. Tolstoy's solution was Christianity, the unshakable belief in the *true teaching* of Jesus Christ. *How should I live in the right way* Tolstoy best explained in the preamble of

his Chapter four where its content is summarized. His answer was simple: obey the following five commandments:

The first commandment: Do not offend anyone and do not do anything to provoke evil in anyone, because evil gives birth to evil.

The second commandment: Do not be charmed by women and do not abandon the woman that you've united with, because abandoning women and replacing them gives rise to all the debauchery in the world.

The third commandment: Do not swear oaths over anything because it is impossible to promise anything since man is entirely in the hands of the father, and oaths are judged as evil acts.

The fourth commandment: Do not oppose evil, but tolerate insults and do even more than people require of you: do not judge, and you will not be judged. All that man can teach by taking vengeance is vengeance.

The fifth commandment: Do not make distinctions between your homeland and that of others, because all people are the children of one father.' (Tolstoy 1957: 838; Tolstoy 2012: 58-9).

*

Young Wittgenstein fully embraced Tolstoy's solution and this obviously was the strongest element in his thinking and behavior which led to his survival and preservation of his own life, and the decoration of his breast with orders of valor.

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Notes

1 Weininger was one of the strongest influences on young Ludwig mainly with the uncompromising motto of his austere ‘artistic’ philosophy which roughly preached that you have to be either a genius or nothing; in the latter case the sensible thing to do is to commit suicide. To prove allegiance to this central thesis of his philosophy in 1903 Weininger killed himself on the stairs of the house where Beethoven died in Vienna. (In Hitler’s circle Weininger was regarded as the best and most *decent Jew*.)

2 When I met Wittgenstein, I saw that Schlick’s warnings were fully justified. But his behavior was not caused by any arrogance. In general, he was of a sympathetic temperament and very kind; but he was hypersensitive and easily irritated. Whatever he said was always interesting and stimulating, and the way in which he expressed it was often fascinating. His point of view and his attitude toward people and problems, even theoretical problems, were much more similar to those of a creative artist than to a scientist; one might almost say, similar to those of a religious prophet or seer. When he started to formulate his view on some specific problem, we often felt the internal struggle that occurred in him at that very moment, a struggle by which he tried to penetrate from darkness to light under an intensive and painful strain, which was even visible on his most expressive face. When finally, sometimes after a prolonged arduous effort, his answer came forth, his statement stood before us like a newly created piece of art or a divine revelation. ... The impression he made on us was as if insight came to him as through a divine inspiration, so that we could not help feeling that any sober rational comment or analysis of it would be a profanation.

3 As Chover (Chover 2010) shows, that there is a problem as to which one of the two then available German translations of Tolstoy’s book Wittgenstein bought in Tarnow and later read.

Chover gives preference to the translation of 1892. We are faced with the same issue regarding the English translations of the book. This happened perhaps because at the time of its creation *The Gospel in Brief* could only be published abroad (Gusev 1957b: 1002) and we should not exclude the possibility that Tolstoy made changes to the text when revising the translations in the different languages. Whatever the case may be, I shall consider that the original Russian text of the book is the one we find in volume 24 of the *Complete Writings* of Tolstoy of 1957 (Tolstoy 1957). Below I shall sometimes quote from the original Russian text in my own translation.

4 The sentence is taken from a letter written in 1857 by Tolstoy to his aunt countess Alexandrin Tolstoy.

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